Ritusamhara

BY R. S. Pundit

Acc No - 7

RITUSAMHARA

OR

The Pageant of the Seasons

Translated from the original Sanskrit lyrics of Kalidasa

BY

R. S. PANDIT

Frontispiece
by
Nandalal Bose

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In memory of
Rabindranath Tagore

No sooner was the lovely moon full of all the digits
Than she was seized by the jaws of Rahu:
Just when the water-bearing cloud had turned sombre
It was shattered by the force of the gale;
No sooner was the noble tree laden with fruit
Than it was consumed by the forest fire:
Just when you had become the crest-jewel of the world
You have yielded to the sway of Death.

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IN SALUTATION

LIKE the flowering boughs of springtime, like the cool music of hidden streams in summer noon tides, like the soft radiance of autumn sunsets on mountain snows, poetry makes an instant and universal appeal to the heart of man.

Ranjit Pandit's fine and faithful English rendering of the mellifluous Sanskrit lyrics of Kalidasa celebrating 'The Pageant of the Seasons' needs no foreword other than his own admirable preface, in itself a noble testament of beauty, courage and faith. But it was Ranjit's special desire endorsed after his death, almost a year ago, by his wife Vijayalakshmi Pandit, that I should bless and commend Ritusamhara, *his last legacy to the world of letters.*

He was essentially a poet by temperament, immediately and exquisitely aware of every claim of beauty in all its myriad forms, whether in nature or art or in human ideals and achievements.

He was a man of a singular sweetness of character and a singular charm of personality. He was a scholar of deep learning and wide culture which divided itself in some strange though harmonious diarchy; his brilliant mind touched by Western influences responded eagerly to the challenge and stimulus of modern thought and revelled in the miracle of modern progress, but his spirit, proud and jealous of its splendid heritage, sought its sanctuaries of delight and consolation in the glory of the sacred and secular classics of ancient India.

The simple story of his brief half century is quickly told. He was born in 1889 of a Saraswat Brahmin family of Maharashtra with a tradition of learning, settled in Rajkot. He received his early education in India and completed his higher studies in European Universities choosing the profession of Law. In 1921 soon after his marriage to the beautiful daughter of Pandit Motilal Nehru, he made his home in Allahabad. But he soon abandoned his legal career and flung himself with passionate fervour into the struggle for India's political liberty *alongside of his distinguished father-in-law and Jawaharlal Nehru, his wife's renowned brother. Only at rare intervals could he steal away happily with his wife Vijayalakshmi and his three charmingly named daughters, Chandralekha, Nayanatara and Rita Vitasta, to his little mountain home in Khali, near Almora. But not for long could this soldier in the battle of freedom tarry in the paradise set among blossoming orchards in the shadows of the Himalayas. For him, as for countless of his fellows, his duty involved constant travail and continual sacrifice interrupted only by frequent and protracted terms of imprisonment. Ranjit utilised the enforced leisure and seclusion of his various periods of detention in literary pursuits, occasionally making vivid and skilful English translations of famous Sanskrit books like Kalhana's* Rajatarangini *or "River of Kings," and Visakhadatta's* Mudra-Rakshasa *or "The Signet Ring."* Ritusamhara *or "The Pageant of the Seasons" was completed during his last internment in 1942, before he was released from prison utterly broken in health only a few months before he died. The final phase of his illness caused him intense physical suffering which he endured with heroic serenity and fortitude. At dawn, on the 14th of January this year, he passed away in Lucknow mourned by the entire nation. His body was taken by his family and friends to Allahabad for cremation; on the 3rd day with due rites and ceremonies his ashes were scattered on the waters at the confluence of the Ganga and the Jamuna, considered holy by the Hindu race.*

'My words are not intended to be an eulogy of one who is beyond the reach of mortal praise, nor are they meant to be an epitaph of one who has ensured his own immortality. They are a salutation of love to a gallant and gifted comrade who has passed into the region of his dreams and visions, where the seasons have yielded up to him the secrets of their changing magic and his soul has found the ultimate answer to the mystic issues of life and death.'

Hyderabad Deccan
2nd November, 1944

Sarojini Naidu

INSTEAD OF A PREFACE

IN the summer of 1937 Rabindranath Tagore wrote to me that he would like to stay on our fruit farm at Khali in the Kumaon Hills. Since the sale of his own orchard at Ramgarh many years ago he had not visited these hills. The Khali house was given to the Congress Socialist Party for their summer camp and Tagore accepted the offer of the best house in Almora where I called on him on a June morning. Tagore was a great gardener. We soon drifted on to Sanskrit poetry and our flowering trees. He was interested to learn from his secretary that we had named the farmhouse "Ritusamhara" after Kalidasa's poem describing the seasons. It is customary in the hills for the individual house to have its own name. Khali has fresh attractions for each season; and, anyway, it was good to let the unexpected visitor know that the house was ready for him in all the seasons of the year. Tagore suggested that I should translate the Sanskrit lyrics of Kalidasa into English and add accurate notes on the plants, flowers and birds mentioned in them.

From July 1937 the world of affairs had claimed me. The work of the U.P. Legislative Assembly, which began to function from the end of the month, was an addition to our normal activities. I was unable to pursue Tagore's suggestion until I had the good fortune to share, in 1940, a prison-cell with Jawaharlal Nehru at Dehra Dun where I could utilize the enforced rest by attempting literary work. While in that prison we read Tagore's memorable message delivered in 1941 on "Crisis in Civilisation." Tagore felt very deeply the injustice done to India in withholding freedom and democracy from her during a war which was professedly being fought for these ideals. I can hardly express the depth of response his message evoked in our hearts. Three months later we heard of the passing away of this great son of India. The Sanskrit verse which then occurred to me forms the dedication of this book. At the time I was engaged in completing the translation, from Sanskrit, of *Mudra-Rakshasa*, a political play which deals with war and strategy. Although things said casually might be passed over in *oratio obliquâ* I felt that Tagore's suggestion was not an isolated remark. He considered that the time was ripe for the revaluation of many Western concepts and theories concerning India. Accordingly, after finishing the work in hand I commenced the examination of the original text of *Ritusamhara* in the different editions available to me including the first Calcutta edition of 1792. My release from

Dehra Dun jail at the end of 1941 interrupted this until I was back in prison in 1942.

Most prisons, unhappily, have wide gates ! The gateway to prison leads to the grinding mill of reality. The prisoner's money, personal odds and ends, loose paper, and the like are deposited at the jail gate. And when the sinister prison doors have clanked disagreeably behind him the prisoner's world is reduced to a few hundred cubic feet and all he has are the clothes he wears and what ideas he has stored in his head. Life in prison is a day to day affair. One faces a new day with no possibilities of hiding oneself from it. The day itself loses its individuality and the week-ends have a strong family resemblance in their rigid sameness. One misses the usual surrounding objects, the carpets, the soft lights, the numberless pleasant unnecessary things that colour and oil the wheels of life. To enjoy the luxuries of life one must go long without them. Apart from the usual discomforts and restrictions there is a lack of privacy. One is accustomed to take privacy for granted; it is only in prison that one realizes that it is a great and precious luxury. Then one has to learn to grow invulnerable to the pricks and pettiness of prison life. And, above all, there is a tense atmosphere in jail. Literary work can hardly be attempted until the prisoner settles down to his cage. The powers that be, had apparently planned to keep us, if they could, in concentration camp for the duration of the War, and possibly also during the swell after the storm until the still more complicated peace could be settled to their own satisfaction. My wife and the eldest daughter, not yet out of her teens, were already in detention and the little ones were left at home, who especially needed the mother's loving care and guidance. This was a disturbing factor and, for sometime, I was unable to compose myself.

My mind was sorting out the details of the past two decades. Gandhi, the great awakener, had, since the end of World War I, set up a vast churning process in India. He taught the people to fight non-violently and courageously for a principle and to choose the *peine forte et dure* until the movement for freedom had become a mighty wave in an unfathomable ocean. Gandhi had voiced the ideas of his people and had thus revitalized them. So, too, had Tolstoy's words given shape to an idea which though formless had already existed in the mind of the Russian people: the idea of rebellion against state authority. Both Tolstoy and Gandhi built on the foundation of ancient convictions and gave an outlet to the currents of their times and in each of them the genius of his own nation found expression for itself. The adoption of their ideas by multitudes has worked a miracle which in fact has been the logical and inevitable outcome of the situation. So it has always been in history, that an entire generation has owed its outward freedom to the inner freedom of one individual. Foreign rule in India is now doomed. The struggle for freedom can have but one end. There is too much sheer devotion and determination in the ranks for failure to be even remotely possible. The policy of the foreign rulers could affect, for a time, the political attitudes of a handful but the fundamental loyalties of the millions are unalterable. Tagore said in his last message: " The wheels of Fate will some day compel the English to give up their Indian empire. But what kind of India will they leave behind, what stark misery ? When the stream of their centuries' administration runs dry at last, what a waste of mud and filth will they leave behind them ? "

An American friend had lent me an interesting book, *The Flowering of New England*, by Van Wyck Brooks. The author describes the rapid progress of education and the founding of colleges and universities after the colonists had won the War of Independence and cast out British rule. The Americans, liberated from British imperialism, achieved a phenomenal rise which had no parallel in history until the Russians, freed from Czarist imperialism in recent times, proved the possibilities latent in the masses of the people. In their thirst for knowledge, Brooks tells us, the Americans turned to Europe as well as to the Orient for knowledge and distant India was selected, together with ancient Greece and Rome, for sources of the wisdom of the ancients. Early in the nineteenth century Sanskrit attracted the attention not only of the American scholars but of the lay people. Brooks records: " Many a farmer's son walked to Boston hoping to catch a ship to India where he could study Sanskrit." And " Elihu Burritt of Worcester, the learned blacksmith, was a typical figure of the moment. This well known self-taught linguist who, as an apprentice, had kept a Greek grammar in the crown of his hat to study while he was casting brass cow-bells made a version of Longfellow in Sanskrit." Emerson loved the hymns of the Vedic poets of India. Brooks tells us: " It was these poets of the early ages, the bards and seers whom Emerson loved the best—they who spoke with authority and not as the scribes, who spoke of the morning of the world, whose words stood for things, for the simplest feelings —not gifted men who sang, but the children of music, whose scope did not lie in exhibition, whose aim was to serve the gods." Then there was Henry Thoreau who learnt to love Indian philosophy and thought. " Henry as much as Emerson, delighted in the Oriental scriptures, which he read in the French and German versions. The Bible had lost its bloom for both; but the Vedas, the Bhagavad Gita came to Henry like desert winds, blown from some Eastern summit. They fell on him like the light of the moon when the stars are out, in the furthest reaches of the sky—free from particulars, simple, universal, uttered with a morning prescience in the dawn of time. What rhythms, what a tidal flow ! Beside these Asiatic books, with their truths like fossil truths, clean and dry, true without reference to persons, true as the truths of science, the literatures of the European countries seemed to him partial and clannish, presumptuous in speaking for the world when they spoke only for corners of it. Henry liked to remember that the barn-yard cock was originally the wild Indian pheasant such as the poets of the Upanishads knew." In 1850, Fitzedward Hall, the American Oriental scholar, was Professor of Sanskrit in the Government College at Benares, the holy city of the Hindus and their ancient seat of Sanskrit learning.* Brooks describing Thoreau's method of civil resistance thus quotes him, "If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the state will not hesitate which to choose," and observes: "A foolish notion, many people thought, but some of them changed their minds, in later years, when one of Henry's Hindu readers, Gandhi, acting on the principle, disturbed the British empire." Gandhi has paid noble tributes to Tolstoy and Thoreau and acknowledged that he owed to Thoreau the inspiration of his method of civil disobedience which he so successfully used on a large scale against the mighty British empire. The Hindus believe that one must pay one's debt to the Rishis, the ancient thinkers and sages, by educating oneself. Thoreau doubly paid the debt, for he furnished the Indians with a weapon to become a free and independent people. Gandhi's task was much harder since there was no such state in India as Thoreau had envisaged. Nevertheless the British found Gandhi's civil resistance a hard nut to crack.

After the conquest of Abyssinia, Mussolini had announced that he had adopted the British administrative system in India, lock, stock and barrel, from viceroy to district officer. And, like the British government, he too was good enough to declare that the government of Fascist Italy, was the trustee of a backward people ! Apparently it is necessary in order to redeem and free a people to have secret police, tapped telephones and concentration camps. After the outbreak of World War II the British system in India has, without disguise, functioned as a police state. The axis of dictatorship is the secret police. The C. I. D., (initials of the Criminal Investigation Department) is a euphemism for Britain's special political police in India. The history of regimes contains periods when the rulers are only able to maintain themselves in power at the cost of their own legal system. Gandhi and Nehru, and all those who were anti-fascist when the rulers of Britain were appeasers of the Nazis and the Fascists, are in detention and over a hundred thousand Congressmen and Congresswomen have been arrested and imprisoned. The thick barrier of World War II had already hid the people of all nations one from the other, for three years and communication between them had almost ceased. The action of the British government had barred the Indian leaders from understanding and sympathetic contacts with leaders of public opinion abroad during these critical years. Gandhi and Nehru are not narrow-minded nationalists. They have the cause of world freedom and brotherhood at heart. Conscious that India was politically and spiritually welded to China, Gandhi wrote, just before his imprisonment in August 1942, to Marshal Chiang Kai-shek in order to make clear to the Chinese people the meaning of his movement for immediate independence: "Because of the feeling I have toward China, I am anxious to explain to you that my appeal to the British power to withdraw from India is not meant in any shape or form to weaken India's defence against the Japanese or to embarrass you in your struggle. Whatever action I may recommend will be governed by the consideration that it should not injure China or encourage Japanese aggression in India or China."

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* Later Hall became Professor of Sanskrit and Hindustani at King's College, London. He was the first American scholar to edit a Sanskrit text of the Vishnu Purana.

The lot of political prisoners is nowhere enviable. In Nehru's province his colleagues and comrades have been classed as Q prisoners as being potential Quislings and are, therefore, held incommunicado. They are deprived of the right of correspondence and interview with relatives which are allowed to convicts. For, in this unhappy land to be accused, or even suspected, is worse than being convicted. They are denied newspapers though these can now only publish censored news, the publication of which is officially encouraged for propaganda purposes. Apparently the authorities desired that the mind of the political prisoners should not be jarred out of the lethargy into which they hoped it would settle. We tried to gather some measure of serenity with which to face the anxieties and strains of this greatest tragedy in human history.

Despite the rules and regulations of the high and mighty, human curiosity about the news of the war fronts and the Indian political situation broke down, in course of time, the barriers between the gaoler and the gaoled. The prison buzzed with news and rumours like a bee-hive and we were aware of the growing unrest in the country, the murmur of which seemed to pulse in the air. The lack of accurate news of the world convulsion was at first a sore trial, and yet, in course of time, it helped to induce a mood of harmony. Other things helped still more. By a curious coincidence I found myself in the same barrack in the Central Prison at Naini on September 19th, the identical date on which in 1930 I had come here to join Jawaharlal Nehru and other comrades. In the course of these twelve fateful years which have been longer, fuller, more important than the rest of my life taken together I was brought five times to this very barrack before transfer to other prisons. Habit has its good side. It makes one inured to local contacts. This barrack had housed Motilal Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad; and for me it was full of memories.

Aristotle calls memory "the scribe of the mind." When all else is taken away the mists of memory still remain. None can take away the joy we have had in reading lovely books, or listening to great music and poetry. Nor can the love bestowed on us by those whom we have loved fade even when the loved ones are far away, or have passed into the shadow of death. Nearly a quarter of a century ago I had shifted from Western India to the United Provinces. These years had been lightened for me by new friendships opening out new mental horizons. On the other hand, life with its cleavages and changes had also affected me; for its currents and drifts are capable of taking persons who have been close to one another to opposite ends, or to different poles of thought. Joy and woe are woven fine. Were it not so, human nature could hardly bear the weight of sorrow. The familiar barrack in this prison revived memories stored in the chambers of my mind. Here one could be free *inside* the prison-walls ! Music was always sounding silently in my mind. I was no more lonely than the north star. From where I slept I could see once more the Seven Rishis* fading in the early morning over the top of the barrack wall. I found my feet here and began to relapse into the plane of normality.

In October I tentatively began to grow a few seeds of winter annuals saved from our little prison garden of last year at Dehra Dun. They came up triumphantly. As they thrust their rootlets down to the receptive earth, and becoming one with it, began to lift their heads to the light, they set an example which was infectious. It was possible to grow roots in jail. It was possible to derive consolation and patience from the spirit of life which was bringing forth, even in the barrenness of prison, new leaf and the promise of flowers. Even a small patch of garden is a tempting affair. The more garden one has the more one wants and the more one does the more cries to be done. It was not possible to cease to worry about the future. It was, however, worthwhile to try and exclude from the mind all that was irrelevant in prison, for nothing was so real as present circumstance. And gradually I regained my resilience.

Our barrack became a school for the study of ancient and modern languages. We might have been a bunch of college instructors on a long uneasy vacation. A former minister of justice was assiduously plodding through Sanskrit grammar. Meanwhile the breath of the delightful cold weather of north India hovered round us. The immigrant wild goose and duck, and the demoiselle crane, imitating aeroplane formation, swung with steady purpose across the blue to make landings at their haunts on the mighty rivers, the Ganga and the Yamuna, the paradise of birds, near this prison; the parrots preened and plumed themselves and made love on the top of prison walls; while some of the feathered friends including the shimmering blue-jay and the wide-eyed wag-tail alighted to visit us in our barrack. On a late October day while I was musing over the march of time and how little I had done with the year I reverted with half deprecation, half relief, to the old notion of literature as a holiday. It may be that the work of a man who knows how to make an aeroplane propeller is of far greater importance at this time than any literary work, though this may not represent a permanent alteration of values. And Time, the perennial regulator of values, will doubtless subdue the overemphasis. Science is in no danger now; the arts and humanities are. A proper study of the humanities does not merely revivify the past for us. In the reconstruction of national and international life they may help in creating new values. Accordingly, I made up my mind to translate *Ritusamhara.* To read Kalidasa was like coming home after an absence of centuries. I began translating rapidly; and by the middle of November the six cantos were finished. By the end of the month brief explanatory notes and most of the draft introductory notes were added. Early in December I submitted the translation to be vetted by the Speaker of our Legislative Assembly, Purushottamdas Tandon, our brave and trusted leader in more than a political sense, who is one of the comrades in this barrack. He is a lover of Sanskrit and English literature and poetry. His appreciation and interest have sustained me in my meagre effort to produce a modern translation to re-discover Kalidasa's poem.

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* Saptarshi = The Great Bear.

Sir William Jones, pioneer of Sanskrit studies, first aroused keen interest in the study of Indian antiquity by his translation published in 1789 of the finest Sanskrit drama, *Sakuntala,* which was greeted with enthusiasm by such judges as Herder and Goethe. We find in the preface to his translation of *Sakuntala,* Sir William Jones referring to its author Kalidasa, " as our illustrious poet the Shakespeare of India." Jones had founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 and to him belongs the credit of having printed the first edition of Sanskrit texts. *Ritusamhara* has the distinction of having been the first Sanskrit text of which an edition was printed and published in Calcutta in 1792.

The original text of *Ritusamhara* is in four-line stanzas. In its structure, Sanskrit poetry has little in common with English verse. It practically makes no use of rhyme; nor can it be fairly compared to English blank verse. It does not depend upon accent. On the other hand it is closely related to Greek and Latin forms. The *anushtubh* stanza of eight-syllable line is the almost equivalent of the Greek iambic dimeter. Thus it was not possible to translate Sanskrit lyrics into English in form and content. The rhymed English stanza would be altogether too rigid and limiting. Much of Kalidasa's finest work, especially in his plays and his lyrical poetry, has a charm of diction which it would be impossible to reproduce in translation. Nearly all attempts to translate verse into verse have been futile. The poet's language, in all its variety and astonishing wealth, is reduced to form in his own medium, as a musician expresses himself in sounds. The Sanskrit stanzas are usually in different musical metres. In all eight varieties of metre are used in the six cantos of *Ritusamhara*. And some of the meaning is in the sound !

The translation is as close as possible and faithful to the spirit of the language. It was often necessary to borrow in the past to track down all the fine shades of meaning of Sanskrit words. I have tried in the translation not to lessen its resemblance to the original, for the chief characteristic of these lyrics is their simplicity. As many lines as were found necessary have been used for the translation of each stanza. Where there is a *double-entendre,* or a simile, and sometimes there is a combination of both, as in the opening stanza of the Third Canto, or the last one of the Sixth Canto, the original four-line stanza runs to several lines in the translation. This was inevitable since the Sanskrit stanza often balances itself on the rope of a single metaphor.

Apart from annotated editions intended for the use of college students *Ritusamhara* has not been fully translated into English. This is a complete translation of all the six cantos. Nothing has been omitted, save the stanzas which by consensus of Indian opinion are regarded as later accretions in some manuscripts. I have compared the early Calcutta edition of 1792 with the critical editions of Indian scholars since published and have used the emendations made by them in the light of later research. I have followed, generally, the traditional interpretation of the text given by Sastri Venkatacharya Upadhye of Baroda College in his new Sanskrit commentary on the text. The current Marathi names, given by this learned commentator and by Professor Kale, of the trees, creepers and flowers mentioned in *Ritusamhara* have materially helped in identifying them and tracing their botanical names. For the transliteration of Sanskrit names and words in the explanatory notes the method adopted by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute has been followed. Kalidasa's title *Ritusamhara* has been suitably translated as the Pageant of the Seasons,* a phrase borrowed from Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis,* which I re-read in this prison. Kalidasa is both a painter and a poet; the painter to whom the world is a pageant and the poet for whom the world is a song.

Bare and unscaleable walls deprive us of the sidelong shafts of the sun and effectively shut out the dawn as well as the violet light of the sun slipping below the horizon. Vexed by the flies, the dust, the glare and the surroundings I think of the Himalayas. The mountains are good friends. It feels good to have such big strong friends. I long to see the dark belts of the pines stalking over the landscape and to sense the abiding peace and beauty of the forests which are unaware of the agonies and convulsions of a continent. I dream of the sun-drenched Khali garden where the apricot and peach lead the other fruit trees in the blossom parade, and the acacia and mimosa distil their seasonal fragrance and spread their feathery greenness on the mountain air. I long to be quiet in the living room of " Ritusamhara " at Khali, dimly lit, at the hour of twilight, by the orange flames of pine cone and cedar log, and to think of nothing in particular save perhaps to wonder at the intricacy, the improbable beauty and cruelty of man's existence and to muse, sometimes, over human nature which alone seems to be constant in this everchanging world. Nevertheless, I venture to look forward—for war releases dynamic forces—to the time when humanity will take, as it must if it is to continue its upward path, the great step across the bounds of nation and race in a larger and wider human fellowship. And I look forward to the unknown date of release from this galling suspense before it begins to pall. Samuel Butler wrote: " Behold and see if there be any happiness like unto the happiness of the devils when they found themselves cast out of Mary Magdalene." I guess I have stumbled on such happiness sporadically. When it comes my way next time I shall be able to send this manuscript to our friend, Miss Padmaja Naidu, who knows the difficult English language so well, although she does not know Sanskrit. She has a keen eye for carelessness, impropriety of phrase, and inaccurate punctuation, and above all the sense of the music of language. She will consider whether it is desirable to decorate this translation with illustrations to keep in harmony with the original text. And I hope to add the finishing touches at Khali to prepare the work for the press. It was said of Plato that even when he had passed the age of eighty he combed and curled and braided the locks of his writings.

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* "The beauty of the sun and the moon, the pageant of the seasons, the music of daybreak and the silence of the night, the rain falling through the leaves, or the dew creeping over the grass and making it silver."

It is usual to write the preface when a book is ready to go to the press. For this I have not waited. I have merely endeavoured to finish my work. In these pages there is perhaps too much of the writer, inevitable because of his local habitation. He ventures, nevertheless, to offer his disjointed prison-musings—a part of which sounds like a news-reel—to the benevolent reader in lieu of preface.

I do not know when this manuscript will see the light of day, or whether it will find the common grave of oblivion without a mourner. No one is more conscious than I, how little I count, or this book is worth, during the pressure of war, when everything is seemingly in the melting pot and the future of the world may well be at stake. The Sanskrit poet wrote long ago :

" The night will pass,

And a lovely day will dawn

The luminary will rise

And, presently, the day-lotus will unfold with a smile;

While yet the honey-bee thus mused at sundown
Immured in the calyx of the lotus,
Alas! the lotus-plant was swallowed by an elephant."

R. S. P.

Naini Central Prison
Allahabad,
December 4th, 1942

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

RITUSAMHARA, literally the gathering of the seasons, is a descriptive poem of 144 stanzas, attributed by tradition to Kalidasa. It is thus probably more than fifteen hundred years old. In Sanskrit poetics the genius or instinctive gift of a Kavi, or poet-seer, is known as pratibha. The Germans call it *Unendlichkeit* or infinitude. Kavya, or the creative work of a kavi, is not limited to poetry. It includes the drama which in Sanskrit is mainly prose interspersed with lyrical passages. The kavya is sub-divided into epic, dramatic and lyric. *Ritusamhara* is a lyrical poem technically known as khandakavya.

The poem opens with summer so as to conclude with spring. This, the commentator tells us, is in pursuance of the ancient adage : " One should wind up (a meal) with a sweet." The Indian year breaks down to six seasons. As in a pageant, the seasons parade before us in six successive sarga or cantos. The seasons are summer, the rains, autumn, early winter, winter, and spring. The duration of the season is two months. The month and moon are closely associated with the season. Thus the duration of each season is fixed by the ordered wanderings of the moon as she changes from shield to sickle, from sickle to shield.

Kakki, artist of Old China, wrote: " Wherein do the reasons lie that virtuous men so love *Sansui*, landscape ? Landscape is a place where vegetation is nourished on high and low ground, where springs and rocks play about like children, a place that woodsmen and retiring scholars usually frequent, where birds cry aloud their joy in the scene." Description of the phenomena of nature sounds like an old story, told too many times. *Ritusamhara* is not merely an objective description of the seasons. Sanskrit literature and poetry contain magnificent descriptions of the beauty and grandeur of nature and there is little in this slight poem which can bear comparison with descriptions in the works of other Sanskrit poets and authors, or with Kalidasa's references to nature in his more famous works. The author's approach is different. He sees clearly and inescapably the whole year with his mind's eye. The poem in progress is there for analysis until the vision is finally finished. The world is a mirror for his moods and he makes *Ritusamhara* a love-poem. He does not tell us what love is—whether it is a part of life, a malady to be cured, or the whole of life including the remedy. We think of the advice of Theocritus to Nicias: " There is no other remedy against love, but only the Muses; and this is a gentle medicine . . . but hard to find." Perhaps love does not dominate the whole of our life.* After the first transports, everything depends upon how much wear and tear one can endure without changing one's mind and breaking up. And in life there is plenty of wear and tear. No matter how much we discuss love the last word on it is still to be said. And Kalidasa in his day said it with a love-song.

" My study of antiquity," wrote Sir William Hamilton, " has kept me in constant thought of the perpetual fluctuation of everything. The whole art is to live the *days* of our life, and not with anxious care to disturb the sweetest hour that life affords—which is the present." Evidently the poet, too, planned these lyrics for unconfined joy. He proposes to take life at its face value; to take what comes, rain or shine. It is an index to a gay acceptance of life which he regards as changeful, fluid and active. The thought which seems to be uppermost in the poet's mind is, how glorious it is to be beautiful, to be happy, to be young ! To be so young that beauty and happiness are in the nature of things to be lived. For a fleeting moment he wants the reader to divine how wonderful it would be to be young like the couples he portrays and to believe in the world as they do. He describes *amour physique* as well as *amour passion,* and the peak hour of our life when a whole life can rush to a moment. He imagines a lover who takes the hand of his mate and, remembering the shyness of the very young, talks to cover her shyness and to let her mind flower. It is like someone telling a story; not writing it. He describes not merely the seasons in flux but the feelings awakened by the changing seasons in every pair of lovers. It is a personal statement to which a universal significance is added. Briefly, the poem is a lovers' calendar for the young and the warm-hearted, for humanity is accustomed to think that youth is love's best season.† The moon can bend humans to strange ways and so the poet leads the lovers by his own paths lit by a round moon and a thousand little stars and fragrant all the way with flowers. The muse, according to Sanskrit poetics, should be the counterpart of nature, exuberant and tranquil. And so in the concluding stanza of each canto he wishes the young couples a spirit well and calm—no petulance, no fret, but a long to-morrow rich as yesterday. And it is expected that the reader, who is not so young, will respond to the poet's mood remembering his or her own youth, not with sadness but in the joy of recapture.

We are told that the Western stranger finds India baffling because of her so-called elaborate piety, her penchant for the occult, her evasion of the literal in narrative and report, her objective liberties with evidence. All this is commonly summed up in the term Eastern mysticism. Indian philosophy, it is said, whispers that this is a phantom life, limited and flimsy; and it casts upon everything a spell of disillusionment; and that Indians, consequently, have ever been mystics absorbed in religious speculation. We are told that Indians have taken little interest in the tangible world; they have no eye for nature, curious and beautiful; and above all they lack the incorrigible Western *joie de vivre*. To remove these misconceptions a close study of Indian thought and philosophy is necessary. The Indian philosopher, more than man elsewhere, took flight from the order of the world to the wilderness of nature only to impose a new order on some part of it. He was a seeker of power to erect man above himself. He believed in perfectibility. He was an ambitious pioneer who desired to enrich the human intelligence, to make us long to excel ourselves and to stream out of the confines of the mind into the universe. There are two kinds of classics in Sanskrit, the popular and the esoteric; those that yield their meaning in the first encounter and those that we have to discover by effort and insight; the classics of the intellectual surface, and the classics of the spiritual depths. If the Western critic would turn to the former Sanskrit drama and poetry, he would soon discover his error. The poets and dramatists never considered the human body a piece of impudence or refused to grant it obsequious attention.* Indeed they treated it as a miracle of grace, beauty and perfection. Perhaps only the philosophers in all countries have given too little attention to the nature and purpose of human loveliness. Sanskrit drama and literature are free and familiar as the wind, and lush as an autumn sunset. They hold the history of India—not always the grand history of its best hours, but a history of progressive horizons and increasing tolerance. In *Ritusamhara*, too, the curious reader should find something to interest him. A poet is pre-eminently a man of feeling who gives beautiful utterance to beautiful moods and emotions. Yet here we have an author who does not yield to his free-flowing creative fancies; he finds ecstasy in the mere sense of living. His is a simple and irresistible satisfaction with the gift of life itself. He says " Earth, you are wonderful. Days and nights, you are going to be grand. I believe in you." He has a keen, palpitating interest in life. He is not merely in love with life; he can surprise the reader's blindness by describing what he has seen, for he looks at nature with his own eyes and his description is verifiably accurate. He is manifestly a lover of birdsong, the labyrinth of leaves of trees, and of blossoms of every hue, exulting in the floods of sunshine. The poem is filled with a feeling for the out-of-doors, youth and wild nature. Religion is conspicuous by its absence. Although it is usual for a Sanskrit poem to open with an invocation to the deity, or a benedictory verse, it has been omitted. This departure from the time-worn practice is significant.

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* " Un bel amour peut durer toute une vie ; mais il ne la remplit pas toute."—Romain Rolland.

† Canto V-9.

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* The Indian poets never cried to God like Baudelaire !

> O Seigneur, donnez moi la force et le courage
> De contempler mon corps et mon coeur sans dégoût.

The poet's description of the good earth is vivid. He portrays the original mass production process of nature, which turns out the myriad leaves of trees and the petals of flowers, the wings of insects, and birds. He does not forget the small wild flower, patala, giving out perfume only just perceptible, which we smell in very truth. He makes us see things and listen to the sounds in nature's studio. We see the dense woods and hear the voice of the Indian cuckoo, throbbing with a throaty wail that seems both to call out in hunger and to promise soothing delights. We hearken to the silence of the hills, which is broken by little unstartled birds singing small, sudden, happy songs. He sings of the clearness of still waters and the mirrored skies of meres and pools. The tricks of water, playing its sweet games, all circles and dimples and lively gleaming motions, are beautiful. He describes the flowering tree, the flame of the forest, whose tight buds burst and writhe open when the spring sun becomes vehement, and the trees look surprised as they get caught by summer before the dark green leaves are ready; and about the same time the giant silk-cotton trees and the Erythrinas squander their garish bright flowers in a reckless abandon of self-display.

The poem opens with a description of full summer, and of its effect on man and beast. The heat increases progressively and results in a forest conflagration. Sudden jets of fire are thrown up which spread the menace of the flames. Into the battle between the forest and fire the third party, the wind, the ally of neither, enters as an *agent provocateur* egging them on to greater violence until the glowing mass of silk-cotton trees stand silhouetted against the horizon struggling in the conflagration. There is a wholesale scamper of the refugee wild animals through the bush. After the burning droughts come sudden floods. The monsoon blows in at the appointed time from the appointed quarter. With an incredible orgy of life-giving energy the dead burnt earth revives and so, too, the deer-haunted forests of the Vindhya mountains. The rains come, stirring the people as no other manifestation of nature stirs them. As the heavens open and the rain descends, beating with a kind of drumming rhythm in the air, every tree seems to be swelling with importance and moving upward with an exultant promise. Nothing is so lovely to the Indian ear as the patter of rain shower, an ordered filigree of sound. In a few days, the vines send forth long tender shoots of a lettuce green colour, which creep everywhere with a strength and a persistence out of all proportion to their fragile appearance. Then the monsoon abates and the last weeks of fitful rain slip into a delicate golden autumn. This favourite season of the ancient Indians is a time for a contemplative survey. The harvest has been garnered; the weather is serene, facilitating wide outlooks across the landscape of life.* In the velvety blackness of the open sky stars appear again, the Indian stars that are different from stars elsewhere, more brilliant than ever now in the clean washed air. They are so ripe and big and close, one could pick as many as one wants. The lotus reigns once more in the pools of lucid water. The clouds are afloat with fleecy skirts and river banks bustle with the migratory wild duck and goose while the flamingo stalks among the cranes. Sanskrit poets loved to describe the arrival in autumn and early winter of the wild fowl, and the demoiselle crane whose flight at high altitudes they imagined was full of sensations, keener than any known upon earth. The wings of these birds are marvels of lightness and grace, and every feather is a separate triumph. The bird's hearts are strong, and they fly on and on to lands beyond the snowy Himalayas. During the cold weather of North India one may, with luck, see these fliers of the high altitudes on any morning. As one watches their diminishing shapes being swallowed in the depth of blue sky one wonders why they all migrate and none brood in India ? No one knows. Rest and food are their aim here, but love and marriage are for the region beyond the snow-line. The brief spell of sharp cold weather ends in spring, when there is warmth in the sun and coolness in the shadow. The poet records the drama of the month of March. The sun pours down in glorious splendour and the soft breeze turns leaf and flower into sparkling, trembling colour. There is a mysterious vibration in the air, in the ripples of the river, in the fluttering flight of birds, in the rustling of the leaves of trees in the garden. Flowers come out of nowhere, begin to open, to smile. And so the eternal cycle of the seasons goes on. We may imagine that the youth, eager to pluck out one moment from the flux, says to the maiden: " Eternity is now. There is no past about it and no future. It just *is*. And that's how my love is for you."

" And mine for you," she whispers.

The garden, the trees, the birds do not change but each generation has its own story, its love, its romance and its quarrels. And so, above all, the poet deals with woman, whom men all down the ages have admired and loved. " Women," according to Guy de Maupassant, " belong to no caste, no race; their grace, their beauty and charm serving them in the place of birth and family. Their inborn finesse, their instinctive elegance, their suppleness of wit are their only aristocracy, making some daughters of the people the equal of great ladies." In this poem there is no reference to man's practical achievements. When man touches the core of his capacities—puts his best into the work that in his eyes stands paramount—he has no need of woman. She comes before and after. She inspires, compensates or completes; but the achievement, the creation, is man's alone. And intelligent women understand and yield to this unspoken precept. In these lyrics he is merely present as being necessary to woman. Man, for all his philosophy and art, is at heart an adventurer. The poet apparently considers him the more variable phenomenon. Manly virtues which are praised, may differ in different countries and where they are the same the emphasis is differently laid through the centuries. Men are transient by nature. The true woman is timeless and universal.

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* " May you live a hundred autumns "—was the ancient blessing for long life.

The poet depicts the woman's world, her love-life and the sphere of the eternal feminine. The detailed description of her dress and decoration, jewellery and flowers, beauty aids and toilet accessories, the make-up of eyes, face and lips, the use of subtle perfumes and cosmetics sound familiar and modern and the centuries are obliterated. Several stanzas are pen-pictures. We see the parade of young women, charming and debonair, with the flashing smile of good nature, the singular wild beauty of India in their crown of hair studded with flowers and the easy grace of movement. In these women, radiant with vitality, there is mingled a gracious element of repose and charm. We may imagine them keenly observing one another, prepared to lift an eyebrow and whisper behind a fan over the slightest wrong detail, and the smart ones among them circulating like busy bees getting tiny drops of the sweet honey of gossip. We see some, with perhaps a comb in one hand and expertly shifting a mirror in the other, studying their charms to keep them at their apex. The winter blouse is a contrast to the alluring summer décolleté. Some women are portrayed in dishabille, stretched in the mild winter sun like a kitten, and others in bedroom scenes. The description is 'near the bone' and leaves nothing ambiguous as far as frankness goes; it is sometimes startling in detail, and in its casual implications. No painter can paint a portrait with his eyes half closed. Yet the Eve portrayed in these lyrics can remain naked and the beholder is not compelled to lower his eyelids. In India and other warm countries where the exigencies of climate do not necessitate the wearing of much clothing, nature unadorned gives rise to no feeling of false shame. The ancient Indians like the Greeks, considered that sexual desire was natural and right, to be accepted with gratitude and good humour as part of our constitutional equipment: and they entertained no morbid feelings of guilt at its presence. In India the act of love has, thus, never been considered a depravity. It is life, it is generation. It is what love and creation and sleeping together should be, at once brutal and tender, satisfying and sometimes cruel.* To be young is like riding an unbroken horse; it gets you nowhere unless it runs away with you. To be young is to be sometimes foolish like a gandersnipe. Man is at his best when he still retains his enthusiasm and has shed his exuberances; when he has learnt what to pick up, and what to pass by; when he no longer imagines that to taste a cup one must taste the dregs.

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* Romain Rolland.

Language can but extol, not reproduce, the beauties of the sense and Sanskrit poets were aware that the reader was sufficiently educated to perceive the purpose of the poet's exacting art even in indiscreet descriptions, and to appreciate the literary ability with which they made use of words so as to flavour them with good taste. In that age no one read a book out of purposeless curiosity, or with the object of whiling away an idle hour. The lack of precaution of language has never shocked the Indian audience and indeed it was unnecessary for an author to hang a verbal fig-leaf.* The old poets and authors wrote, primarily, for Indians; the sympathy of the outside world gained in recent times is a welcome and happy accident.†

The author of *Ritusamhara* is not concerned with men with a hawk-like instinct for prey or with minds darting here and there like the humming bird sipping the honey of delight from whatever flower caught the eye; nor with women who know the world by heart. It was an age when pre-marital chastity and post-marital fidelity were honoured and probably generally prevailed. His conception of love is not liaisons but married love. Marriage was not a lottery where one had to make the best of what one had drawn, or a great adventure which was worthwhile. In the Fifth Century (A.D.) the belief must have been common that between the married couple there was some prescience, an unfolding of knowledge of each other that they had built up in other lives, through all the successive civilizations in every clime, and with every tongue until they met once more in *India Beata* not altogether by accident. This, no doubt, is still the living faith of millions. To the Indian what love means in the end is that he should have children who do not die until they have had children in their turn. A woman needs much more than the companionship of man. " Car en elle," says Romain Rolland, " ce n'est pas l'amante, c'est la mère que l'amour éveille." Man, before the arrival of children, is seldom aware of them. Afterward he can scarcely credit life as holding any interest without them. And there comes a time when one's life begins to appear less important and the weight shifts to one's children. One stops and thinks: Does this vague transitory stage called life make sense? The answer is No, not much sense except that there are children. To have children seems a satisfactory answer to many vital questions. To love is possibly the deepest urge in our nature and one can always love one's own children. With this may be compared the Greek view of life as described by Will Durant: "Love in the truest sense, as a profound natural tenderness and solicitude, comes to the Greeks, as to the French, after marriage rather than before; it is not the spark thrown off by the contact or nearness of two bodies, but the fruit of long association in the cares and industries of the house. When the young man marries he brings his bride to his father's home, and the rhythm of the generations is renewed."* Thus the ancient Indian word for progeny, *santana*, still current, expresses literally the sense of human continuity. This ever present consciousness of children speaks for a culture at its highest tide; a community that believes in itself, is serenely sure of itself and of its future and is eager to perpetuate its forms.

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* The Indian viewpoint finds an echo in Laurence Housman, poet and artist, who aggrieved by the censorship of his plays in Britain wrote: " The suppression of words acted as a stimulus to their use for the excitement of the sexual sense; and if only we could get rid of the shock the stimulus would go with it. The effect that words have on us is governed by habit and by association: so that to this day timid maiden ladies will sit and listen unscared to a curate reading, for the first lesson of one of the feasts of the church, a detailed account of the Jewish rite of circumcision, which elsewhere they could not hear mentioned, and perhaps some people will be shocked by my mentioning it here."

† Bhavabhuti, poet and playwright of the Sixth Century (A.D.). is an exception. His posthumous fame has proved the truth of his challenge to his unfair critics that if his work was not appreciated by his contemporaries it would be appreciated by future generations for "the earth had vast spaces and time was endless."

The poet describes the young wives who are so deep in love as to be quite drowned in it, and little bubbles appear at the corners of their lips. They are depicted surrounded by a pool of glory when at last they turn away from their lovers, gratified and at peace, with a body reborn. When the wedded couple, brimming over with happiness, watch with comprehensive silence, tender vines in bloom the bride readily sees beauty in whatever her lover appreciates, probably recalling a thousand sensations of quickened life since her marriage. When persons love each other it seems they feel more moved than ever in the presence of beautiful scenes. They seem to understand one another without the use of words. Thus the bride feels the exaltation and marvels of the honeymoon and of awakened desires and the identification of herself with the groom in the miracle of shared love.† Between man and maid there is, however, a tension; an indefinite quick expectancy like the string of the lute, taut but at rest, and the quiver of it is among art's primary impulses.‡

The maiden slight and lissom, is portrayed looking meek. She takes bashful peeps at the world—peeps coming sideways under dropped lids. Then comes spring disturbing the innocent peace of the sleeping senses. In her body there is a mysterious tender vibration. She responds to nature. She feels very light yet tired and suffers from an indeterminate malaise. She is a little sad, yet with a fluttering, exulting feeling in her heart. There is in her a new force longing for expansion. Adolescent girls gaze at the mango blossoms and listen to the half-throttled note of the cuckoo flying over. A little stone has been thrown into the still pool of their lives. They feel it ripple, little air bubbles rise and burst, and the surface is disturbed. Though well-tethered, the girls feel disposed to play with the idea of adventure. They have their blithe fancies which in spring come like wavelets; and although their day dreams are gone before they ever reach positiveness, they are shimmering with happiness.* This is a fundamental instinct of the female organism like that of the bougainvillaea putting the purple colour into its blooms.

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* Will Durant: *Life of Greece*, also Canto II-21.

† Canto VI-17.

‡ Canto II-11.

On the other hand there is the woman of experience. Hers is gaiety that has not yet become a defiance of sadness. Despite rain and thunder she persists, nor counts the cost and keeps her date with her lover.† She is the more forthcoming of the two and her bold and ready enjoyment of whatever is foolhardy is a challenge to his manhood. In Sanskrit erotics she is known as abhisarika. Lightning is feminine in Sanskrit and is personified by the poets as the wife of the cloud. She has sympathy with the woman going for the assignation.

Then there is the woman who has tasted of our common frailty. She is frankly called a wanton,‡ for according to the old poets 'women are not like precious stones the most valuable of which are those that are set the oftenest.' Thus the author has no sympathy with the married woman who, yielding to the flood of impulse, has a paramour. Nevertheless, she is not denied a place in his pageant. Such women may be few but their problem is often a real one. If their unhappiness is an unhappiness of love, women may sometimes try to cure themselves bitterly by falling out of love with love itself. They may succeed in obtaining relief and regaining their poise and becoming even-minded in the end. But sometimes, though less easily than men, they may when marriage has gone on the rocks, compensate themselves by throwing out a new shoot, like a creeper baffled by a gap in a wall, and grow emotionally in a new direction.

The case of the young wife whose husband is unimaginative and self-indulgent and who sulks when he cannot have his own way, is hard. Apparently her relations with him of late have been full of abysses. He is obviously no middled-aged person coarsened by the years who has ceased to listen to the tirades of a domestic scold. He is reproved for the passionate recurrences of youth and the young wife, to salve the wounds of her humiliation, has stiffened instinctively from contact with him. It was not possible for her to say nothing and to forget though this has been the easy way open to all wives and the way which many of them have accepted in this hard, rich, eternal struggle between man and maid. She wages the battle that so many of her sex have waged before and since; the battle in which words are useless and tears of no account. It is one of woman's duties to cover over and conceal the scars and the wreckage caused by the divagations of the male animal. Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner. If one shirked knowledge one shirked life; and that was no good. It is the split in the love which drains one. They must heal and come together. She must accept the situation and reconcile it with greater wisdom. It may be that a rash man, when he is all at sea, is grateful for a steady woman; and the world goes easier when mistakes are forgiven. The poet's solution is the unexpected urgency of her love for him.*

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* Canto VI-15, 21.

† Canto II-10.

‡ Canto II-7.

No civilization can drop its past any more than a man can drop his memory and still be himself. The past is stored in the present.† Indian litterateurs stem from an old culture. Recently they have been trying to reclaim the golden fleece of the past, and scholars have begun to speak more and more with the ethic of the ancient systems in their veins. A national literature ought to be built as the robin builds its nest, out of the twigs and straws of one's native meadows. It was thus that the past was harnessed to the future by Kalidasa. Myths and legends are the dreams of nations. The ancient Indian myths and sagas are realistic and purposeful. They form a precious part of the heritage of India. They are like a pane of glass through which the past is visible. Some of them are universal anecdotes in which the Indians immortalized their philosophy and artistic sense. Among these great legends is the story of Kama, god of love, which recalls the lines of Keats:

> The ancient harps have said
> Love never dies but lives immortal Lord:

Indian mythology illustrates the eternal struggle between the powers of darkness, the Titans (Asura) and the shining ones, the gods (Deva, Sura) through various stories. One of them is the theme of Kalidasa's famous poem, The Birth of Kumara. Kalidasa, who felt behind him the stream of tradition, kept to the general form of the tale in re-writing the ancient legend, for he was aware of its power to re-interpret itself to generation after generation.

A great Asura, named Taraka, jealous of his creator defied the shining ones, preferring to see the sky red instead of blue. He began to devastate the world, and all the appeasement on the part of the gods failed to check him. In their helplessness they went on a deputation to seek the advice and aid of Brahma who predicted that the son of Parvati, Maid of the Mountain, and Siva would lead them to victory and bring relief to the world. At this time Siva was engaged in practising austerities and the fair Parvati had not met him. Thereupon Indra, ruler of the gods, consulted Kama who undertook to kindle the flame of love in Siva so that he might marry Parvati. In the third canto of this poem Kalidasa describes Kama's well-laid plan of assault on Siva, and its tragic sequel. Kama, in search of Siva, sets out with his bow and the quiver filled with flower arrows, accompanied by his wife Rati, rapture; and his bosom-friend Vasanta, god of the vernal season. They traverse peak after peak of the snow-laden Himalaya, freedom's untamed heroes who refuse to be subdued, save by the sun alone. At last they arrive at a place where a desolate repose reigns in eternal winter, and there discover Siva leading the life of renunciation. Vasanta then begins to function and to exercise all the powers of his charm. The icy wind abates, the snow disappears, and the trees burst into blossom. The deer, the birds, the butterflies, the buds respond to the life-giving magic impulse of spring; and colour and delicacy, power and splendour are poured forth in unceasing floods. And Kama infuses his loveliness, as love has a way of doing with whatever he touches. Siva alone is impervious to the change of season and continues calmly to meditate. For a moment Kama is in despair. Just then the fair Parvati arrives and, making her obeisance, greets Siva. And they are revealed each to the other. At this moment Kama aims his deadly bow, to shower flowery arrows of desire at Siva, to upset his penance and to disturb his mind. Siva sees him. A flame flashes from Siva's third eye and the fire darting from it envelops the body of Kama, and, in a moment, he sinks into ashes. Rati and Vasanta are overwhelmed by the disaster. The lament of Rati is one of the purple patches in the poem. Parvati is tactfully borne away by her father, the snow-mountain Himalaya. Kama's purpose is, however, achieved, and the wedding of Siva and Parvati takes place in due course. Siva, the conqueror of love, is, in turn, conquered and becomes the most perfect among lovers. And his offspring Kumara, the war-god, defeats and destroys Taraka and thus secures the victory of right over might. Like Sophocles the Indian legend concludes hopefully, that though the moral order of the world may be too subtle for us to understand, it is there, and right will triumph in the end. Kama, the immortal god, does not perish, though his body was consumed in the mighty flame. Love has since been without a body, Ananga,* and continues to live in and dominate the

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* Canto V-6.

† "The piling up of the past upon the past goes on without relaxation. In reality the past is preserved by itself, automatically. In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant. Doubtless we think with only a small part of our past, but it is with our entire past, including the original bent of our soul, that we desire, will and act." Bergson: *Creative Evolution.* (Mitchell's translation), pp. 4-5.

* Canto VI-9-10.

minds of living beings. It is said that there is a drop of death and murder at the bottom of every love and every kiss. Siva allegories are expressed in numerous beautiful Indian sculptures. Epstein observes: " Siva dances, creating the world and destroying it, his large rhythms conjure up vast aeons of time, and his movements have a relentless magical power of incantation. A small group at the British Museum is the most tragic summing up of the death in love motive ever seen, and it epitomises, as no other work, the fatal element in human passion. Our European allegories are banal and pointless by comparison with these profound works, devoid of the trappings of symbolism, concentrating on the essential, the essentially plastic."*

The Kama story throws light on some of the stanzas of the last canto of *Ritusamhara.* It also throws light on the theme which recurs in all the cantos and is known in Sanskrit as ' love in separation.'† This theme, still a favourite one with our poets, has retained its appeal through folk-songs and in recent times has been popularised through the songs of the stars of the silver screen. The lonely traveller suffers from emotion so sweet, so poignant with feeling, so charged with a stabbing remembrance of love while his doting mind conceives the most delicate fancies. All this is summed up in the word *utsuka* which veils many feelings and desires and includes a yearning to experience the pleasure of affectionate union, and to feel again those subtle and charming joys when hearts long parted are at last united. Love is pain and pleasure mingled in right proportion; it is sharp and bitter-sweet. The idea of a thing is more perfect than the thing itself. It lives when the thing is ruined. The same is true of emotions. Imaginary feelings are the strongest. Imagination gives one balance and keeps one from utter disillusionment. The lover sees the loved one's image as if it were framed in happiness. He visions her by day and dreams of her by night. The idea underlying ' love in separation ' is fundamentally sound. For one does not love with the body only, or the mind only, but in the core of one's imagination.

In his *Cloud-Messenger*, Kalidasa has immortalized this theme. The poem which is a lyrical gem, won the admiration of Goethe. The idea of sending the cloud as a messenger to the beloved appealed to the German poet Friedrich Schiller, who made use of it in his *Maria Stuart*. The captive Queen of the Scots calls on the clouds as they fly southwards to greet the land of her youth.‡ According to Kalidasa a yaksa, one of the demi-gods who dwelt in some mythological way on the snowy tops of Himalaya, was found guilty of negligence by Kubera, lord of the yaksas, and was condemned to live for a year in exile. Thus separated from his wife the youth chose the Ramagiri hills for his residence. At the approach of the season of rains, which by tradition and song is one of torment for separated lovers, the exile yearned for the society of his beloved until, becoming desperate, he besought a cloud to be the bearer of his message to her. Writing about this poem which is divided into two parts, the American scholar Ryder observes: " The former half is a description of external nature, yet interwoven with human feeling: the latter half is a picture of a human heart, yet the picture is framed in natural beauty. So exquisitely is the thing done that none can say which half is superior. Of those who read this perfect poem in the original text, some are moved by the one, some by the other. Kalidasa understood in the Fifth Century (A.D.) what Europe did not learn until the Nineteenth, and even now comprehends only imperfectly: that the world was not made for man; that man reaches his full stature only as he realizes the dignity and worth of life that is not human. That Kalidasa seized this truth is a magnificent tribute to his intellectual power, a quality quite as necessary to great poetry as perfection of form. Poetical fluency is not rare; intellectual grasp is not very uncommon; but the combination has not been found perhaps more than a dozen times since the world began. Because he possessed this harmonious combination, Kalidasa ranks not with Anacreon and Horace and Shelley but with Sophocles, Virgil, Milton."

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* Epstein: *Let there be Sculpture* (1942), p. 193.

† Vipralambha sringara.

‡ Act III-1.

It was a happy idea to associate Kama, who carries flower-arrows, with Vasanta, presiding deity of the season of flowers. Among the five flower-arrows are the mango blossom and the flowers of the asoka tree.* Sanskrit poets had a number of flower legends. It was said that the asoka tree flowered in happy expectation, from top to stem when touched by the left foot of a lovely woman; the kurabaka bloomed if embraced by her; that the priyangu blossomed by contact with her; the bakula tree flowered if she sprayed it with a mouthful of wine; the mandara tree by her soft caressing words; the champaka was wooed by her winsome smile; the mango tree by the balmy breath of her lips; the karnikara by her dance.† The legend of the sephalika has a reference to the eternal triangle. Satyabhama asked Krishna to give her, as a token of his love, the night blooming shrub with its wild, untamed perfume, growing in the courtyard of his wife, Rukmini. The shrub was accordingly transplanted. Standing in Satyabhama's yard it shed its flowers in the courtyard of Rukmini. This shrub, it is well-known, sheds its flowers, of honey-like fragrance, during the night and the ground below it is carpeted in the morning, with its star-like white flowers with orange centre. Western botanists have named it *Nycanthes arbor-tristis.* The Indian tradition, that flowers at their best may illustrate the possibilities of the human spirit, its joys and griefs, toils and triumphs, finds an echo in Longfellow's poem entitled *Flowers*. He writes that bud and blossom and " tremulous leaf with soft and silver lining " are:

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* Canto VI-1.

† Except mandara and champaka the other trees are mentioned in *Ritusamhara*. The yearning of these trees for lovely women is called dohada on the analogy of women " who have happiness in their body."

Brilliant hopes all woven in gorgeous tissues,
Flaunting daily in the golden light;
Large desires with most uncertain issues;
Tender wishes blossoming at night.

These in flowers and men are more than seeming:
Workings are they of the self-same powers
Which the poet in no idle dreaming,
Seeth in himself and in the flowers.

In all places then and in all seasons
Flowers expand their light and soul-like wings,
Teaching us by most persuasive reasons,
How akin they are to human things.

CANTO

ONE

Summer

The furious sun is ablaze,
One longs for the moon,
The pools of limpid waters
Invite a dip evermore.
The twilight hours are charming
When the day dies down,
And Cupid, churner of the mind, is weary,
This, my love, is the advent of full Summer. 1

The moon has chased and dispersed
The serried ranks of darkness;
Such nights, my love,
And somewhere a dwelling place
With a wond'rous fountain of water,
And congeries of jewels and the liquid sandal cream,
Divert the people's minds,
And add to the charm of the moment. 2

The delightful terraces of the mansions
Fragrant with flowers,
And wine, vivid with the breath and the lips of the beloved,
And song, accompanied by well-strung lute and lyre,
Kindling the light of love,
Are enjoyed by amorous men
During the midnights of Summer. 3

With rounded hips,
Whose grace is enhanced
By soft white silk and the girdle;
With the bosom ornate with strings of pearls,
Or gems and sandal paste,
And masses of hair
With the lingering subtle perfume

Of bath cosmetics,
Women soothe the senses of their lovers,
During the heat of Summer. 4

Gay with the flame-coloured stain
Of laksha juice,
Maidens' feet with tinkling anklets
Vying with the sonorous note of the hamsa,
At every step stir the mind of youths,
And turn them to thoughts of love. 5

Mysterious breasts,
With the fluid paste of sandal
And precious strings of snow-white pearls commingling;
And the region of the hips
With the quivering golden girdle;
Whose mind do they not allure
And fill with a wistful yearning! 6

Proud young women in beauty's bloom,
Overcome by sweat and effusive moisture
Under arm and on perfect limbs,
Discard their cumbersome garments
And cover their high and pointed breasts
With fine linen and thin raiment. 7

Dormant Cupid, as if he were asleep,
Is awakened with the gentle breeze
Of fans moistened with sandal water,
With soft melodious music tuned
To vallaki lute and kakali pipe,
And the gentle pressure of rounded breasts
Inseparable from ropes of pearls. 8

The moon, long gazing, at will,
At the faces of lovely women
Sweetly slumbering on whitened terraces
At night, is doubtless over-eager;
Overtaken by dawn
He is sadly crestfallen,
And hides his shame in pallor. 9

The earth oppressed with stifling heat
And enfolded in the circling dust storm
Raised by unbearable winds,
Cannot be seen by the lonely traveller
Whose mind is scorched by the fire of separation;
His vision being blurred
He cannot tread his weary way. 10

The antelopes, harassed unceasingly
By the terrific glare of sunshine,
With thirsty palates and parching tongues,
Can scarce espy the firmament
Dark like the powdered collyrium;
They think 'tis a sheet of water
In the midst of an alien wood,
And, bounding, lightly break from the earth. 11

Romantic maids, like the adorable gloaming
Lit by the shimmering moon, playfully dally
With lips that hold a ready smile,
And with stolen glances from lowered eyes
They soon ignite the flame of love
In the mind of the wayworn wanderer. 12

Oppressed incessantly by the sun's rays,
And scorched by the heated dust on the way,

The cobra, with its hood depressed
And spiral gait in uncurled length,
Pants ever and anon,
And rests on the ground in the peacock's shade. 13

A quenchless thirst has put an end
To the brave deeds of the lion, lord of beasts;
Panting audibly with jaws agape,
With lolling tongue and quivering mane,
He ignores the nearby elephant,
Though he loves the furious fray. 14

And the tuskers, too, lose the sense of dread
Of even the lion,
While from the trunks they throw up sprays
Of moisture cool to ease their flanks
Seared by the blistering rays;
And stricken with the growing thirst
They move in quest of water. 15

Weary alike in mind and body,
Through the rays of the sun,
Hot like sacred fire fed on the altar,
The peacock lets the nearby serpent live
Which seeking shelter thrusts its neck
Into the discs on its gaudy plumes. 16

And the herd of wild boar,
Tortured by the broiling sun,
Nuzzle in the drying mud of the ponds
Where the Bhadramusta weeds alone survive;
And digging with their lengthy snouts
Fain would reach the core of the earth. 17

Scorched by the burning rays of the sun,
The frogs leap out of the water
Of the marsh thick with mud,
And sit beneath the parasol
Of a thirsty serpent's hood. 18

In the sylvan pool the tangled mass of lotus stalks
Has been torn asunder,
The fish have perished,
The terrified sarasa have flown away;
For, closely packed together,
And jostling one another,
The elephants, in a herd, have invaded it
And left it a sea of mud. 19

The iridescence of its crest-jewel
Is heightened by the sunbeams,
While the hooded cobra sucks the air
With its lolling cleft tongue;
Worried by the fiery warmth of the sun
And of its own envenomed fang,
And weary with thirst,
It is no more a menace
To the numerous frogs. 20

With foaming mouths
And sagging pinkish tongues,
The wild buffaloes emerge
From the caverns in the hills
With vision dazed and muzzles in the air;
And irritated by thirst
They shuffle in search of water. 21

In the forest the mighty conflagration
Has consumed the sharp dry strings of the grass blades,

And the seared leaves are blown on high
By violent gusts of wind;
The water in the pools evaporates
With the burning breath of the midsummer sun,
And the scourged precincts of the woodland
Present a fearful scene. 22

Flocks of panting birds forgather
To perch on leafless trees,
And troops of weary monkeys
Shelter in caves in the hills;
The herd of wild bison wanders,
In anxious search for water,
The sarabhas suck avidly
The dwindling water of the pools. 23

The tongues of the flames have the fiery tinge
Of the opening petals of the palasha bloom,
The conflagration like glistening sindura is vermilion;
Swiftly it spreads by the force of the whirlwind,
And embracing the tender leafage
Of creeper and brushwood and tree,
Is filled with a wild ecstasy;
And many a glade and green recess
Is soon burnt to cinder and ashes. 24

The smouldering fire hugging the precincts
Leaps into flames fanned by the breeze,
And spreads to the distant hills and dales;
With a cracking noise it sweeps through
Tall clumps of the withering bamboo,
And, in a trice, gathering strength
Pervades the wilted grass,
Scaring and scathing the denizens of the wood. 25

The flames grow manifold in power
In the groves of the salmali trees,
Whose hollow trunks afire
Are glowing like burnished gold;
Leaping to the boughs of neighbouring trees,
Reft of ripe and fallen leaves,
The flames invade the heart of the forest,
Urged by the miscreant wind. 26

The elephants, bisons and lions,
With their bodies singed by the flames,
Cease the mutual feud and fray,
As if they were former friends;
They flee from the burning thickets
Distraught by the raging fire,
And run to a low-lying river-bed
Shelved by the silver sands. 27

May you pass your Summers
Where lotus and lily lift their heads in the pools,
And the flowering patala scents the air,
And plunge, at will, in lucid waters,
And enjoy the argent moonbeams
Shooting lustre into the pearls;
And, at night, on open balcony,
When the air vibrates with song
From a voice that is rich and tender,
May you nestle midst charming women,
In sweet inflowing sleep. 28

CANTO

TWO

The Rains

The approaching season of Rain, dear love,
Comes like a king in pride of power,
The rain-laden clouds are its rutting war elephants;
The lambent flashes of lightning
Serve for its streaming pennons,
And the reverberating thunder
Is the rattle of its kettle-drums;
It is hailed by a host of lovers
As the royal cavalcade is acclaimed
By crowds of suppliants. 1

The sky is, on all sides, overcast
With a barrier of massive clouds,
Deep hued like the petals of the nenuphar
Or heaps of powdered collyrium,
Or liker still to the darksome nipples
Of breasts of pregnant women. 2

Answering the plaintive call
Of the thirsty chataka seeking alms,
The water-bearing clouds,
Bend low, wend slow,
To deluge the earth with generous showers;
And the lisping patter of the rain
Rings sweet to the ears of men. 3

Clouds with thunder, like the beat of drums,
And Indra's colourful bow
Across the heavens, to which the streak
Of lightning serves for a string,
And flowing streams of water,
Like the fall of nimble arrows,
Assail the mind of the lonely traveller. 4

The Rains

Green, like fragments of jade,
The grass rises on *tiptoe*,
Stretching its blades to catch the raindrops;
And a mass of the blithe new foliage
Bursts from the kandali plants,
And indragopaka insects make a crimson riot;
With patches of green and purple and gold,
The good earth is decked with many coloured jewels,
Like a woman of elegant taste
And charm of mellowed ease. 5

Thrilled with the pleasing sound
Of the sombre cloud that heralds storm,
Groups of gay amorous peacocks
Rend the air with their jubilant cries
To hail the friendly rain;
And spreading wide their jewelled trains,
With the love-play of the kiss and embrace,
They hold their gorgeous dance parade. 6

Tearing down the trees on the banks
With swirling torrents of turbid waters,
Rivers go surging to join the sea;
So, too, wanton women bespatter
The men of their clan with mire
By the vehemence of their wild desire,
And hasten to meet their wooer. 7

The slopes of Mount Vindhya,
Where the young green grass is springing
And the gentle does browse to cull a mouthful;
And the woods, where the trees in bloom are clad
In all the glory of their bursting leafage,
Elate and charm the soul of man. 8

There the meadows and sylvan glades
That abound in herds of the timorous deer,
Whose tremulous liquid eyes
Share the loveliness of the newborn utpala,
Rouse memories of soft adorings
That come crowding to the lonely wanderer. 9

/ Even in the blinding darkness
Of sombre, beclouded nights,
Despite the pouring rain and thunder,
Romantic women seeking adventure
Hie to their trysting-place,
While flashes of indulgent lightning
Guide them on their dark way. 10 ✓

/ Often the sheeted lightning,
Followed by a deafening crash of thunder,
And its lingering terrifying sound,
Scare the young wife into longing;
She nestles close and embracing her lover
Forgives the error of his ways. 11

The young wives of voyagers,
In despair and fevered unrest,
Wait and fidget
For the golden hour of the loved one's return;
They discard the chaplets of flowers,
Their trinkets and knick-knacks of beauty;
Like pearly dew on tender foliage
The tear-drops fall from their lotus eyes,
And moisten the twitching lower lip
Red-ripe like the bimba fruit. 12 ✓

Carrying vermin, mud, and wisps of straw,
The turbid grey waters
Are watched by the terrified frogs,
Hurrying in tortuous serpentine ways
Heading for the sloping patch of land. 13

The deluded bees sweetly humming,
Forsake the lotus plant
Now reft of leaf and flower,
And crowd overeager on the discs
On the brilliant plumes of dancing peacocks,
Mistaking them for new lotuses. 14

Wild elephants, delirious with pride,
Fiercely trumpeting, ever and anon
Challenge the thunder of the clouds;
And the region of their temples,
Flowing with ichor,
Is, like the lovely indigo lily,
The haunt of murmurous bees. 15

The granite peaks of the mountain are kissed
By cloudlets floating like the silver lotus;
And all its gulleys and springs and rills
Are flowing and bubbling with water;
The mind is enthralled by the sight of the hills
Alive with the bustling peacocks. 16

Touched by the moisture-laden clouds,
The humid breeze is cool
And fragrant with the blossoms
Of kadamba, sarja, arjuna and ketaki
Whom it mirthfully shakes;

Who does not feel, in the quiet of content,
That something's amiss—
An ache in the heart,
Or a tinge of sorrow! 17

Maids, with their gorgeous hair
Drooping to the hips,
With pendants of fragrant sprays on the ears,
The bosom decked with strings of pearls,
And the lips moist with wine,
Fill their lovers' minds with longing. 18

The clouds, hanging low,
Laden with rain,
And adorned by flashes of lightning,
And gleaming with the rainbow hues;
And the maids, with their glittering girdles
And bejewelled ear-rings,
Capture in the same moment
The lone wayfarer's vulnerable mind. 19

Maidens now adorn their heads
With chaplets of fresh-woven blooms
Of kadamba, bakula and ketaki,
And design the trinkets, at will, for the ear,
With tassels of kakubha blossoms. 20

The young wedded wife,
Richly anointed with sandal salve
And the aromatic incense of aguru,
And her lovely hair coiffure,
Decked with fragrant blooms,
Hearkening to the rumble of the clouds,
When the azure dusk is falling,

Slips from the elders' apartments
And hastens to the slumber-room. 21

The clouds, dark like blue lotus leaves,
Towering in eminence but humble,
Bent 'neath the burden of water;
Nod to the gentle breeze
And stroll across heavens
With lazy steps;
Adorned with the tinted bow of Indra,
They draw by mysterious enchantment,
The hearts of lonely maids
Pining for the straying lovers. 22

The woodland, where the fire is quenched
By the newly sprinkled showers,
Is gaily decked with kadamba tassels
In joyous celebration.
It is dancing merrily; its waving boughs
Of trees are tossed by playful winds;
It seems to be smiling sweetly
Through the sharp white blades of the ketaki leaves. 23

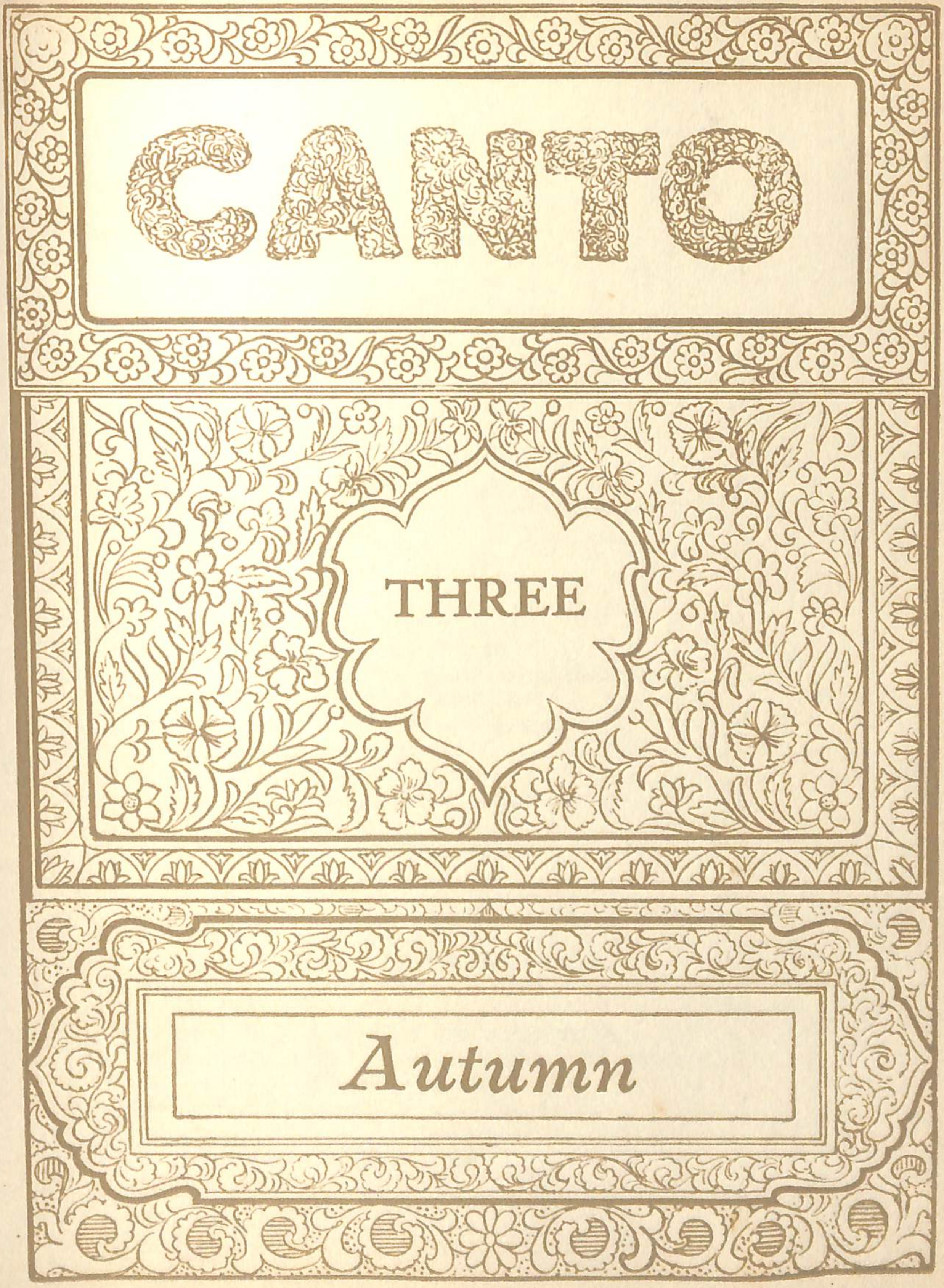
This season with its cluster of clouds, I ween,
Is like a dexterous lover,
For it deftly weaves round the heads of maidens
Chaplets of bakula flowers
Interlaced with malati blossoms;
It designs fresh trinkets for their ears
With wreaths of new blooms
And opening buds of the yuthika creeper
And full blown kadamba flowers. 24

/ Thrilled with the fresh earth-scented air,
And the drip and drizzle of falling drops,
Youthful women express their joy of life
With strings of pearls on their dainty breasts,
The soft white linen on their perfect hips,
And the glamour of the undulant waist line. 25

The wayward wind, wanderer in the sky,
Cooled by the touch of the fresh clean raindrops,
Rustles the leaves of trees
Bowed with the load of flowers,
And makes them dance;
Fragrant with the charming odour
Of the golden pollen of the ketaki,
It steals the heart of lonely lovers. 26

The wooded height of Vindhya is the rest-house
Of the likes of us bent with the burden of water;
So say the rain-clouds and, bending low,
They gladden the mountain,
Licked by the crimson tongues of fire,
With heavy showers of rain. 27

May this period of the rain-giving clouds,
Charming with its many attractions,
The dream of delight of romantic maids,
Unselfish friend of trees and vines,
And the breath of life of animate beings,
Grant you your heart's inmost desires! 28



CANTO

THREE

Autumn

Behold! the lady Autumn comes
Clad in the silver kasa blossoms,
Her fair visage is the white lotus bloom,
The tinkling of her anklet bells is heard
In the tuneful cry of wild geese on high;
The harvest of rice with ripening sheaves,
Bending in billows in the fresh young breeze,
Is her graceful figure and supple body;
She emulates the charming bride
With white bridal vesture and lily-like face,
The jingling anklets and slender figure,
And the shoulders bowed with decorous modesty
And woman's gentle grace. 1

The earth is blanched by kasa blooms,
The night by the silvery moonbeams,
The waters of the rivers are white with the hamsa,
And the pools with the new-born lilies;
The precincts of the woodland are gleaming
With the riot of saptachadda trees
Bending with the burden of flowers;
And gardens are gay with the fragrant blooms
Of the rambling malati vine,
And all is white that greets our eyes. 2

The lucid streams move slow
Like lovely dames grown restful and mellow,
With soft footfall,
And step unhurried;
The sparkling shafari is their glittering girdle,
The cygnets and drakes are their necklace of pearls,
And the flanks of expansive sands
Are their generous hips. 3

Autumn

The puffs of clouds, hung in the air,
Free from rain, eased of their burden,
Are swayed by the wind in their hundreds;
Gleaming like the silver sea-shell,
Or the pallid lotus stalk,
Heaven's canopy is resplendent like a king
Fanned by a hundred yak-tails. 4

The sky is a lovely deep blue
Like the powdered collyrium,
The earth, like the dawn of day, is tinged
Pink with the pollen of bandhuka blooms,
The fields are bright with burgeoning green
Where kalama rice has been sown;
Where is the youth whose heart
Does not throb with glamorous longing? 5

Amidst the kovidara trees,
In whose waving boughs
And tender young foliage
Mixed with the bursting flower-buds,
The breeze skims merrily,
There is a soft whispering turbulence of leaves;
And there the delirious bees
Are greedily sucking the flowing honey;
Whose heart does not swell with joy
At the sight of these lovely trees? 6

The sky is translucent
When rain is done,
And the moon, free from the web of clouds,
Has lifted the veil;
The nights of Autumn, starred and gentle,
Garbed in the spotless fabric of moonlight,

Resemble the moon-face maiden
Decked in her trinkets,
Clad in pure white linen,
And growing in length each day. 7

The peckings of numerous wild ducks
Ruffle the water of the streams,
And make encircling wavelets;
And the banks are thronged
With the kalahamsa and sarasa,
While the cry of the migrant goose
Is resonant everywhere,
Gladdening the hearts of men. 8

The moon is a pageant of delight for the eyes,
With rays of light woven into garlands,
Streaming coolness and ravishing the heart;
Yet lo! the moon darts fire from frosty beams,
Burning like a poisoned shaft
The delicate limbs of the lovely maid
Pining in separation from her man. 9

Shaking the fruitful crops of paddy,
Scurrying over the tops of noble trees
Bowed with the weight of flowers,
And startling the lily new-born
In the full-blown lotus fields,
The sky-borne breeze, perforce,
Perturbs the mind of youths. 10

The lakes, necklaced with the curving waves
Swayed by the lazy morning breeze,
And adorned with the hamsa

Enamoured of its mate,
And decked with the full-blown stainless lotus,
And the deep-hued indigo lily,
Transport the heart with glee. 11

Now the bow of Indra
Has vanished in the womb of the clouds,
And the lightning, banner of heaven,
Has ceased to flash;
The cranes with their flapping wings
Agitate the air no longer,
No more do eager-eyed peacocks
Strain their necks to scan the sky. 12

Forsaking the peacocks,
Who refrain from the dance,
Love draws near to the swans
Whose voice is rich and tender;
And deserting the kutaja and kadamba,
The arjuna, sarja and nipa wood,
The radiant Lakshmi of blossoms
Honours the saptachadda tree. 13

The pleasure parks are redolent
With the scent of the fragrant shephalika,
And echo the gladsome twitter
Of numerous care-free birds;
And on their fringe the does are standing,
Whose eyes replace the charming lily;
The park in Autumn stirs the hearts of men. 14

Shaking the kalhara, padma and kumuda,
And furthermore cooled by their touch,

The breeze, at morn, grows more enticing
As it playfully rocks the dew-drops
Hidden in the folds of the leaves. 15

The rolling fields of abundant rice,
The echo of the tuneful cry
Of flocks of hamsa and sarasa
From the fringe of the landscape,
And the ploughy texture of the land
Adorned by the silent kine,
Gladden the hearts of men. 16

The swan has triumphed, by its alluring movements,
Over women of perfect figures,
The full-blown silver lotus has stolen
The charm of their radiant faces,
The delicate nenuphar excels
Their beautiful tremulous eyes;
And their arched delicate eyebrows,
The least bit raised, are rivalled
By the slender rippling wavelets
In the pellucid water of the pools. 17

The priyangu creeper's sprays
Laden with flowers steal the grace
Of women's arms decked with jewels,
And the gay blossoms of the malati,
Mated with the flowering asoka,
Vie with the glint of women's teeth
Beneath their radiant smile. 18

Maids decorate their mass of curly hair,
Dark like the rain-cloud,

With the fresh buds of the trailing malati,
And add to the exquisite trinkets of gold
Fresh blue lily buds on the ears. 19

Women whose hearts are radiant with love
Still use the sandal cream
And a necklace of pearls on the bosom;
They add to the beauty of their ample hips
By the charm of the circling girdle;
And the anklets in symphony sweet
Caress their lotus feet. 20

The calm field of the Autumn sky, free from the turgid clouds
Spangled with emerging stars, and glazed by the moonlight,
Shares the exceeding glory
Of pools of sparkling water, crystal clear,
Dotted with flowering lotus and lily,
And flashing with the silver wings of swans. 21

The breeze is balmy cool in Autumn,
Mingling with the moon-lilies;
The directions are lovely,
With the scattered silver cloudlets;
The waters cease to be turbid grey,
And the ground is free from mud and marsh;
An amazing display of the constellations,
And the impeccable lustre of the moon,
Declare the glory of the sky. 22

Roused by the sunbeams at sunrise
The pankaja reveals its face,
Radiant like a young maiden
When the light of the moon is fading

The smile slips from the petals of the kumuda
Like the flicker of the smile
From the young wife's lips
When the loved one is going far away. 23

The traveller is now bewildered
To see in the utpala bloom
The dark beauty of his sweetheart's eyes,
And in the blossoming bandhujiva tree
The freshness of her lips enshrined;
And he chokes as he hearkens
To the dulcet note of the amorous hamsa
Vying with the jingle of her golden girdle. 24

Or perchance, at the advent of the glorious Autumn,
Pearly radiance forsaking the moon
Resorts to the faces of beautiful women;
And the tuneful cry of the hamsa
Is lost in their bejewelled anklets;
While the charm of the bandhuka blossoms
Is merged in their lovely lips. 25

May Autumn, whose face is the open lotus
And whose eyes are the full-blown nenuphar's,
In robes of purest white arrayed
With the new-blown kasa blossoms,
Grant you, like the ardent sweetheart,
The favours your heart desires! 26

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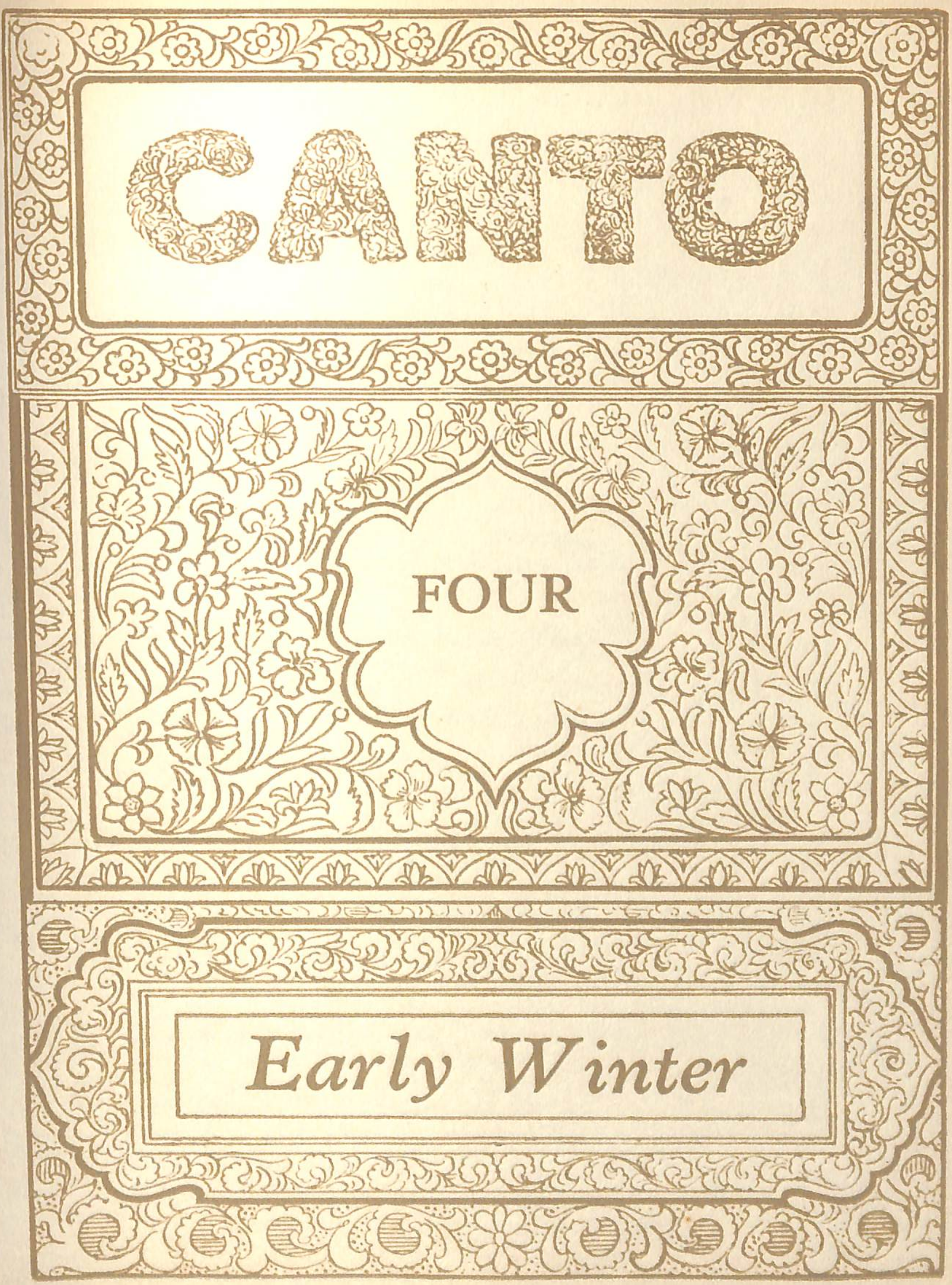

CANTO

FOUR

Early Winter

The spreading barley gleams
With a tender green embroidery,
The harvest of rice is ripening;
The lodhra trees are aflower,
And the lilies are fading away,
And so the falling dews
Usher the pleasant season of frost. 1

Like the gleaming moon,
The snow, or kunda bloom,
The lovely rope of pearls,
Where colourful sandal cream is mirrored,
No more adorns the breasts of elegant maids. 2

No more the golden chains of the girdle,
Studded with many a gem,
Adorn the hips of dames;
Nor are their lotus feet caressed
By tuneful anklets
Vying with the mallard's note. 3

The women of fashion no longer endure
The cool touch on their arms
Of armlets and bracelets,
Nor thin smooth linen on their hips,
Nor on their abundant breasts
The light transparent raiment. 4

Youthful women use on their limbs
The powder perfumed with kaleyaka
And make up their lotus faces,
With tracings of laksha juice;

And the incense of the kalaguru
Lends a finishing touch to the hair
As they prepare to meet their men
The feast of love to share. 5

Albeit their faces are wan and pale,
Youthful women are happy
And serene with love fulfilled;
Scanning the parched aching lips
They refrain from laughing aloud. 6

The dewdrops slipping from the blades of grass
Are the tears shed by the winter
Weeping at morn,
Distressed at the rigorous pressure
On the limbs and bodies of maidens
To which the season lends a peerless grace. 7

The fields covered to the furthest bournes
With rich crops of paddy,
And their fringes adorned with herds of deer,
And the midlands resounding with the distant cry
    of the beautiful demoiselle crane
Which stirs the hearts of men. 8

The lakes, where the decorative lily is blooming,
And the amorous kalahamsa blends its grace,
The limpid waters and verdant weeds,
Steal the hearts of men. 9

The priyangu creeper, my love,
Is mellow and pale,
Swept by the wings of the icy wind,

Like the pallid face of the charming maid
Pining for her absent lover. 10

✗ The mouths fragrant
With the wine perfumed with flowers,
And the sweet odour of the tender breath
Enveloping their limbs,
The young slumber,
Couched side by side,
Twined in each other's arms,
Steeped in the luscious flavour of love. 11

✗ To maids in the first flush of youth,
The dents of teeth on their faded lips,
And the marks of nails on the bosom,
Reveal the pitiless strain of love. 12

1. ✗ Behold! the young maid, mirror in hand,
Making up her lotus face
In the sidelong morning sun;
Pouting her mouth she scans her lips
Whose essence was sucked by the lover. 13

2. ✗ Here is another maid,
Her limbs are limp with love's surfeit,
The lotus eyes are red
With the wakeful night of rapture;
The gorgeous hair lies ruffled
On the drooping shoulders;
She basks in the soft delicious sunshine,
With the burden of sleep upon her lids,
Soothing her limbs in sated rest. 14

And other young women
Free the chaplets of faded flowers,
Whose charming fragrance has had its hour,
From their dark mass of hair;
They nag, I ween, at the weight of breasts
More abundant than their years,
By the slight stoop in their slender figures;
They are busy refashioning their hair. 15

Here is a maid who is radiant
At the sight of her body enjoyed by her lover;
Whilst wearing the bodice on aching limbs
Bruised by the pressure of his finger nails,
She puckers up her charming lips into a smile
While the ringlets of soft black hair get loosened
And cover her eyelids. 16

Other young women of beauty and charm
Are feeling the strain and weariness
Since the surcease of love's harmony,
And their slender limbs are languishing;
When the masseuse is rubbing
The swinging line of shoulder,
The deep fold of the thighs,
And the nipples pressing upward,
They thrill with the intimate touch. 17

May this season of frost with manifold charms
And with the peace of the dreaming landscape,
When the fields are mellow and fruitful with rice;
Ever pleasant and encircled by the calling krauncha
Moving the maids to the depth of their souls,
Add to your welfare and joy! 18

CANTO

FIVE

Winter

The breath of Winter comes
Stealing into the lush greenery of fields of sugarcane,
While yet the earth is spread
With the well-grown paddy;
Hark! my love, for somewhere
The demoiselle cranes are calling,
Bringing pretty maids and jaunty youths
The message of crazy love. 1

To slam casements and window panes
Of living rooms is a joy,
Welcome are the blazing fires of faggots
And the warmer lazy sunbeams;
One longs now for heavier garments;
'Tis for youthful maidens
The true season for enjoyment. 2

No more the fragrant sandal salve
Cooled by the moonbeams,
Nor open terrace nor balcony,
Bathed by the silver moon of autumn,
Nor gentle breezes chilled by heavy frost,
Delight the people's minds. 3

The starlit-nights of winter,
Decked with the sparkling constellations,
Are icy cold with frost,
And colder still by moonlight,
In the piercing chill,
They are not enjoyed in the open air. 4

Winter

Ardent wives repair to their sumptuous bower
Filled with the fragrant wreaths of aguru smoke,
Taking with them the tambula leaf and pigment,
The chaplets of flowers and knick-knacks of vanity;
And their lotus-mouths are scented
With the wine perfumed with flowers. 5

Watching the face shadowed by thought—
In tremor of fear and numb—of the husband
Spurned and reproved for many a lapse,
The proud young wife relents,
And, longing for love and tenderness,
She weans her thoughts from the past. 6

In the retired quiet of long winter nights
Lusty youths are ruthless
In the revels and sports of love;
When the night has drained away,
The young wives are limp with tired limbs,
And gingerly tread their way. 7

Women hail the advent of winter,
They are an adornment to the stars,
With the bosom enfolded in tight bodices
And the limbs in colourful silk attired,
And flowers entwined in the coiffure. 8

Young lovers conquer the wintry cold
By the glow of their warm fresh youth,
The glorious age meant to savour love's delight;
Pillowed on the beloved's fair breast,
Reflecting the ochre saffron hue,
They lie, with arms embraced,

And limbs interlaced
In peace and slumberous calm. 9

/Joyous maids sip during winter nights,
In the company of their lovers,
Delightful and choice wines
For love's awakening and pleasure,
While the lilies floating on the wine cups
Quiver with the fragrant breath of their lips. 10

/In the silver morning the young bride,
Sobered with the overstrain of love's delight,
Sees the nipples of her breasts,
And the resilient limbs embraced by the loved one;
She goes from her sleeping-room to other rooms
With a smile concealed on the fringe of her lips. 11

/While another youthful maid,
With navel deep and ample hips,
And lovely slender waist,
Is just about to leave the bed;
In the early morning hour
She is loosely binding the ends
Of her gorgeous curly hair perfumed with aguru
In which the chaplet of flowers is fading. 12

In the splendour of the morn,
Women in their homes,
With their fresh skins like the golden glowing lotus,
The roseate lower lips, and long eyelids,
Stretched to the ears, suffused at the rims,
Their beauteous oval faces,
And on their shoulders the lovely hair

Tumbling in cascades,
Bear the semblance of Lakshmi. 13

Other youthful women with slender waists
And the burthen of hips and ample bosom,
Tread with languid steps;
They soon overcome the strain of love
As they change into vestments
Fit for the day. 14

In the rising light of the dawn,
The maids examine their limbs
For scars and nail marks;
Fingering the lower lips,
Tender like new-born leaves,
They blush; and rejoicing at love's fulfilment
Proceed to make up their faces. 15

May this Winter time
Rich in dainties, sweets, and lucent syrups,
Charming with the fields of rice,
And cloying with the juice of the sugarcane,
Warm with love's awakening
And happy fulfilment,
But painful to pining lovers,
Tend to your bliss for ever! 16

CANTO

SIX

Spring

The warrior Spring,
Comes with armorial bearing,
Armed with the nimble shafts
Of the swelling mango blossom,
And the murmurous line of bees
Is the twang of his lustrous bowstring;
He is shooting his flowery arrows, my dear,
To pierce the hearts of lovers. 1

The trees aflower are crowned with glory,
The waters are strewn with lotus and lily,
The balmy breeze liberates fragrance,
And maidens are filled with dreams of love;
The languid perfection of the day
Wanes to a quivering twilight,
And all that breathes, or moves, or blossoms,
Is sweeter, my love, in Spring. 2

The breath of Spring is in the air,
Spilling its richness everywhere,
It is stroking the waters of the pools,
Coaxing the lilybuds to emerge unscared,
Chiding the jewels aglimmer in the moonbeams;
It caresses the girdles
Encircling the waists of maidens,
And it is urging the mango trees
To flaunt their blossoms
In the eye of day. 3

At the hint of Spring,
Lovely women blend the charm
Of their peerless figures

With colourful linen vestments,
Dyed in the juice of the kusumbha bloom;
And the region of the bosom is adorned
By fine raiment of ochre brown
Stained with saffron hue. 4

The fresh blossom of the karnikara
Meet for the ear, and a wreath of asoka blooms,
And full-blown flowers of the navamallika vine,
On their wavy dark hair,
Enhance the grace of beauteous maids. 5

Glamorous maidens wrapt in love
Resume their necklaces
Wet with the liquescent sandal on their breasts,
And their intimate wristlets and armlets;
And they wear anew the girdle on their hips. 6

On elegant maidens' faces,
Shining like the lovely golden lotuses,
And adorned with tracings of cosmetics,
Beads of sweat appear
Like pearls that embrace
The beauty of other gems. 7

The maids snuggling beside their men,
Draw breath quickly,
Disturbing the rhythm of the breasts,
Their clothing is loosened,
And their limbs relax, flecked by desire;
Young maids are tense in Spring,
Attuned to love's instinct. 8

Love, the immortal god impersonate,
Makes pale and fragile maidens
Inclined to yawn and languish,
Alive with ethereal quickness,
And they learn to reveal their charm,
With beauty and grace. 9

In Spring the bodiless Love permeates
The limbs of a maiden, in manifold ways;
Into the visionless eyes,
That are dulled by wine,
He puts a sparkle and a softness;
He is the pallor of the cheeks,
And the hardness of the breasts;
He moulds the slimness of the waist,
The fall and swing of the hips,
It is love's beauty itself
That shines through her loveliness. 10

Gathering all her charm in the lines of her body,
Love lends the youthful maid
A touch of drowsy lassitude,
And a little lisp to her speech,
As if tipsy with wine;
He adds the arched remoteness to the delicate brows,
And tilts her glances
Beneath the drooping lashes of the eyelids. 11

Graceful women,
Imbued with the wayward indolence of youth,
Adorn again their fair breasts with sandal salve,
Mixed with priyangu, kaliyaka and saffron,
And the scent from the musk deer's navel. 12

And discarding heavy garments,
Those whose limbs are overcome
By love's lassitude
Soon assume the lighter vesture,
Dyed in laksha juice and scented
With the incense of black aguru. 13

The male cuckoo, crazy with joy,
Imbibing mango juice,
Is drunk as with wine,
And lovingly kisses its sweetheart;
And even the buzzing bee,
In the folds of the lotus petals,
Murmurs sweet nothingness,
And compliments its mate. 14

The mango trees are a blaze of colour,
The new foliage flecked with coppery sheen,
And their bursting blossoms,
Swinging as they list in the breeze,
Dazzle the minds of maids,
And they catch their breath
With golden new excitement. 15

Watching with a rapt seriousness
The clusters of flowers,
Red like coral beads,
Mingling with the leafage,
Down to the ground,
Of asoka trees,
The hearts of youths in love's transcendence
Are touched with a tinge of melancholy. 16

The young atimukta,
The clinging vine,

Whose lovely blossoms are kissed by the crazy bees,
And whose soft tendrils aquiver
Bend in the gentle breeze,
Arrests the eyes of enamoured couples;
Sudden their hearts are filled
With the flowing stream of love. 17

At sight of the surpassing beauty
Of new-born kurabaka blossom,
Rivalling the radiance of the beloved's face,
Which youthful bosom, my dear,
Is not fired with desire,
Smitten with the shaft of love? 18

The Spring has adorned the earth, in a trice,
With the groves of palasha trees aflower
Swinging in the breeze,
Bowed with the load of blossom
Resembling flaming fire,
The earth looks like a newly-wed bride
In lovely red attire. 19

When the palasha flowers have burst
Shrill-red like the parrot's beak,
Does naught remain to pierce;
And what, in sooth, is unconsumed
By the flame-colour karnikara bloom
That the cuckoo with its plaintive air
Fain would stab the hearts of youths
Pledged to maidens fair. 20

The voice of the joyous male cuckoo
Quavers as he sings
The sweet words of his haunting melody,

And the murmur of the intoxicated bees,
Reaches even maidens sheltered
By convention and modest upbringing,
And fills them with a rapture of expectancy,
Making them tremble with delight. 21

Waving the mango boughs in bloom,
And spreading, in all directions,
The fleeting melody of the cuckoo birds,
The breeze in Spring,
Charming since the surcease of frost,
Blows softly and wins the hearts of men. 22

The gardens are gay with the kunda blooms,
White like the gleaming smile of glamorous maids,
Provoking the mind of love-free saints
And even more the fancy of love-stained youths. 23

In the month of Chaitra,
Ringing with the sweet birdsong of the cuckoo,
And the murmur of the wild-bees,
Maidens, with their dangling girdles,
And roped gleam of necklace on the bosom,
Their supple limbs wholly relaxed,
And subdued by the mighty strength of love,
Enrapture by force,
The hearts of men. 24

The sight of the hills adorned with trees
And the varied lovely blossoms,
The sequestered peaks ringing with the echo
Of the voices of singing birds,
And the crevices of rocks strewn with alpine flowers,
Comfort the longing eyes. 25

Seeing the mango trees in bloom,
The passer-by, parted from his loved one,
Feels the bitter tears of umbrage
And yearning scorching his eyes,
And, placing the arm across his face,
He wails and sobs aloud. 26

In this flower-month,
The hovering bee with the balmy spoil of honey,
The cuckoo with its melodious lilt,
And the mango and karnikara trees
With their glory of blossoms;
Tempt the proud girl's mind
With stinging darts of the swoop of thought
Kindling the flame of love. 27

With the veiled barbs of the tender mango blossom,
And his good bow the charming palasha bloom,
The mazy line of bees for his bow-string,
The spotless canopy of silken moonbeams,
The low south wind from Malaya
For his lordly rutting elephant,
And the singing cuckoo birds for his chanting minstrels;
May the bodiless Kama,
Bosom friend of Vasanta,
And sovereign conqueror of the world,
Bring to the growing generation
Hours filled with bliss! 28

CANTO I

Stanza 1, *Line* 7 : CUPID—Churner of the Mind

The Churner of the mind, Manmatha, also known as Manasija, "the mind-born" is weary after the temptations and opportunities for love during the preceding Spring. How the God of Love came to reside in the mind is in the Introductory Note.

Stanza 2, *Line* 6 : SANDAL (Sk. Chandana)

The English word is derived from the Arabic pronunciation of the original Sanskrit name of the *Santalum Album* tree with its strongly scented yellowish brown heartwood. It is a small evergreen tree found mostly in parts of Bombay Presidency and in Mysore State. It is also grown in Coimbatore and parts of Madras Presidency adjoining Mysore State. The wood is hard, very close-grained and oily, the branches slender, and drooping with the leaves opposite. The flowering time is from February to July and the flowers are brownish-purple in colour. The plant is easily propagated from seed and is a root parasite, the roots sucking nourishment from the roots of the neighbouring plants by penetrating them. Sandal oil is valuable for its remarkable fragrance and is well-known for its healing virtues. The tree is felled at the age of thirty for the extraction of the essential oil and for sandal wood. Sandal paste is still commonly used in India especially in the summer as it has a cooling effect. It is also a votive offering in individual and public worship and Hindu women offer it together with flowers, kumkum and perfume to guests at marriages and other festivities.

Stanza 4, *Line* 3: LINEN (Sk. Dukula)

Dukula also means silk woven very fine. It is interesting to note that only linen and silk are referred to in this poem but not cotton fabrics for women's wear. There are two reasons for this. Kalidasa is describing the activities of men and women of the wealthier classes who enjoy luxuries such as "dwelling places with fountains," "ornaments of gold and pearls," etc. who would not be in the habit of using ordinary cotton clothing. Apart from this, according to the *Alamkara Sastra*, while silk (Dukulam or Kshoumam) is believed to be auspicious (Mangalprada) and is always associated with all occasions of happiness and rejoicing. Similar use of the word may be found in Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* (Act IV) and other Sanskrit poems.

Stanza 4, *Line* 9 : SOOTHE THE SENSES

When the heat increases in full summer and stoops upon the earth, the birds grow silent and the dust between the roots of trees is serrated by eddies of hot wind, the time is past for love-making. The ancient Indians and Egyptians learnt early that perfume dominates the senses of love. It is now generally recognised that perfume is essential in tempting a man for it automatically brings to his mind certain memories which disturb him and rouse his passion. It is an interesting experience to visit the shop of an Indian perfumer. The magician of the perfumes raises now one, now the other of his phials from the shelves among which he has grown grey. Softly he draws the stranger's hand, rubs the back of the hand with a glass stopper and holds it up to his face to smell.

Stanza 5, *Line* 2 : LAKSHA (Sk.); *Lacifer Lacca,* commonly called lac

Lac is obtained from encrustations on the branches of various trees, chiefly *Butea Frondosa* (palasa or dhak), *Schleichera trijuga* (kusumbha), *Ficus Reliogosa* (ashvattha), *Zizyphus Jujuba* (ber), etc., produced by the insect, *Lacifer Lacca.* This insect punctures the bark, sucks the juice and transforms it into the encrustations. Lac is a valuable dye.

Laksha juice mixed with perfume and red colour was used as a cosmetic and fine lines and small designs used to be drawn on the feet with it. It is supposed to kindle thoughts of love. The use of laksha juice is still believed to be a part of the auspicious alamkaras or decorations for marriages and festivities and is commonly used in Bengal, Marwar and Andhra. References to this decoration, known as "Parani" are common in Sanskrit literature. Drawings of leaves and other designs in laksha juice were also known as *Patra* or *Makaripatra.*

Stanza 5, *Line* 4: HAMSA (Sk.); *Anser indicus,* the Bar-headed Goose

The *Anser indicus* or the Indian bar-headed goose breeds in May and June in Ladakh and Tibet, Central Asia and Western China. In winter it moves South to India and Burma, arriving in October and departing the following March for its homelands. It is found in the large lakes and jheels of North India, but it is chiefly found on the river-banks of North, West and Central India. The birds spend the daylight on the sandbanks and forage in the neighbouring fields night after night, doing great damage to the young shoots of wheat, barley and rice. The geese live in pairs and small parties, also in large flocks from 20 to 100 birds. They fly very high and keep in regular formations. At all times they are very wary and difficult to approach and the flock are believed to post definite sentinels. Whistler writes: "The call is a deep, sonorous note uttered by several birds in unison, and usually described as 'gaggling'."

It is the cherished dream of many Indians to travel beyond the Himalayas to Tibet to visit Manas Sarovar, the fascinating lake near the Kailas Mountain which is the legendary home of the hamsa which has always been regarded by the ancient Hindus as the symbol of supreme purity of mind and heart. The hamsa was supposed to be the vahana or chariot of Saraswati the Goddess of Learning and also of Brahma, the Creator. The hamsa, which is always described as dazzling white, is a favourite metaphor of Sanskrit poets who never tire of describing its whiteness and gait and song. Its slow-moving, rhythmic and graceful walk is compared with the graceful walk of a beautiful woman and its sweet voice to music. Its sonorous and echoing voice was supposed by the poets to rouse feelings of love.

Stanza 6, *Line* 3 : SNOW-WHITE

The simile which occurs again in Canto IV is one that would naturally appeal to the poet who belonged to Northern India where during the intense heat of the summer everything white creates an impression of coolness.

Stanza 6, *Line* 5 : GOLDEN GIRDLE (Sk. Mekhala)

The girdle is one of the oldest Indian ornaments and forms part of the customary gifts comprising the daughter's dowry at her marriage. It is interesting to note that silver is not mentioned in this poem. The early Indian's knowledge of silver went hand in hand with that of iron owing to the manner in which the metals were found intermingled in the ore which produced them. Thus silver is not mentioned in the Rig Veda (at least 1500 B.C.) for iron and silver are not found in any quantity in the North-East of India. On the other hand gold and gold ornaments are repeatedly mentioned in the Rig Veda where the poet expresses his gratitude to his royal benefactor for the gift of ten nuggets of gold in addition to other gifts.

Gold was treated as a sacred metal and it was not usual to wear gold ornaments below the waist. Thus anklets are always made of silver except among royalty and the very rich in contact with royalty.

Stanza 7, *Line* 5 : HIGH AND POINTED BREASTS

In some countries it was customary to bandage growing girls to make them flat-chested. India was never one of them. Women's figures as described in ancient Indian works on the art of love leaves no room for doubt on the question.

Stanza 8, *Line* 5 : VALLAKI AND KAKALI

Vallaki is the Veena or Indian lute.

Kakali means delicate tone. The passage refers to the melodious and delicate tunes that can be woven on the veena by Indian musicians. Kakali is also the name for a flute with a soft note said to be popular with thieves to ascertain whether the victims were fast asleep.

In the Rig Veda we read of different kinds of musical instruments, the drum, the flute and the lute. The last of these, the veena, continues to the present day to be the most popular of Indian instruments. We learn from the Sutras that music formed part of religious rites. Vocal music, often mentioned in the Rig Veda must have been still older and the highly evolved chanting of the Sama Veda perhaps went back to the Soma ritual and the remote Indo-Iranian age. In the list of callings to be found in the Yajur Veda the drummer, the flautist, the lute-player and the conch-blower are mentioned as professional musicians. For original books on Indian music see *Sangita Ratnakara* of Sarangadeva, edited by Telang; *Raga Vibodha* of Somnatha with Gharpure's commentary; and Ambrose: *Geschichte der Musik.*

Stanza 8, *Line* 7 : PEARLS (Sk. Hara)

The word hara etymologically means " that which attracts the mind." The secondary meaning of the word is a string of pearls which the poet describes as snow-white in order to emphasise the cooling effect of the necklace of pearls adorning the sandal smeared breasts of the beloved.

The ancient belief is still current that pearls improve if worn next to skin and gain in lustre when in contact with the body temperature. The best pearls have always been imported: those found on the North-West coast of Kathiawar and in the extreme South and in Ceylon are not equal to the pearls imported from the Arabian and Iraqi coasts. As compared to the indigenous diamond, beautiful pearls are still preferred by Indian women for their adornment.

Stanza 9, *Line* 1 : MOON (Sk. Chandrama)

The Moon in Sanskrit, as in German, is masculine. When hanging like a sickle in the dark half of the month it is said to resemble a man full of self-pity.

Stanza 10, *Line* 4 : THE TRAVELLER

The theme of " Love in separation " described in the Introductory Note recurs in other Cantos and is a favourite theme with Sanskrit poets.

Stanza 11, *Line* 1 : ANTELOPES (Sk. Mriga)

The original can be translated both as antelope and gazelle. Both have the same soft liquid eyes, and slender legs and their veins are visible under the skin. They are an inexhaustible metaphor for Sanskrit poets when they praise the slenderness of the beloved, the delicacy of her skin and the beauty of her eyes. The gazelle furnishes the simile for the large, dark, gentle eyes of the Indian girls, shaded with long, dusky lashes, which droop modestly when a young man gazes at her. In the translation the antelope is preferred as it leaps most fleetly: the gazelle does not leap.

Stanza 11, *Line* 5 : COLLYRIUM (Sk. Anjana)

Anjana, a black pigment made from burnt almonds, sometimes mixed with camphor, which is used for painting the eyelids has great medicinal qualities and is commonly applied by women to refresh and beautify the eyes.

Stanza 13, *Line* 3 : COBRA (Sk. Phani)

Among the noxious animals mentioned in the Vedas the serpent is the most prominent. There is no trace of a serpent worship in the Rig Veda. It was no doubt the cult of the indigenous non-Aryan population and has survived to our own times mainly among the jungle folks. The Vedic Aryans, like their cousins in Iran, believed that the foe of India, ruler of the gods, possessed the form of a serpent. Thus the Vedic Indians believed in a dragon of the deep. By the deep they meant the unfathomable depths of the aerial ocean.

Stanza 13, *Line* 6: PEACOCK (Sk. Mayura); *Pavo cristatus* (Linnaeus)

The common peafowl or *Pavo cristatus* (Linnaeus), is confined as a wild bird to Ceylon and India. It is found almost throughout India from the valley of the Indus eastwards except in the greater part of the Sunderbans of Eastern Bengal. In Sind and the neighbouring desert areas it was apparently introduced by human agency. In its purely wild state the peafowl lives in thick jungle especially around small rivers and streams. The birds live in small parties resting and feeding in the undergrowth by day and roosting on the trees by night. When the surroundings permit they move out into cultivated areas for the morning and evening meal. They are very wary and shy, and run away swiftly on foot among the bushes when approached. They do not often fly but once on the wing, they can travel fast with regular, slow flapping movements which they sustain without the gliding common to most game birds.

The domestication of the peafowl is of very ancient date as the gorgeous plumage of the bird and its strutting pompous pride appear to have attracted notice very early in India. Thus it is a common sight on the outskirts of villages where it feeds in the fields with an almost complete disregard of passers-by and roosts at night on trees among the houses. The peacock is polygamous, his harem consisting of two to five hens. He takes no share in family duties. His call is a loud trumpet-scream resembling the *miaou* of a gigantic cat. In Northern India it is said to form the syllable "Menhao" meaning "Come Rain," for the peacock is especially noisy at the approach of the rainy season, the breeding season being from June to August.

The *Baveru Jataka*, a Pali work of about 500 B.C. mentions that Indian traders took peacocks to Babylonia. Rice, peacocks and sandal wood exported from India were known to the Greeks by their Tamil names and the introduction of the peacock to Europe is usually attributed to the conquests of Alexander the Great. During the Middle Ages no formal banquet was considered complete unless a peacock was served up garnished with its head and tail. It is believed that the first syllable of the bird's name comes from the Anglo-Saxon *pawe* derived from the Latin *pavo*, this in its turn coming from the Greek and Persian onomatopoeic word from the loud call.

In the Artha Sastra the peacock is mentioned among the list of birds to be kept near the royal palace to detect the presence of snakes and other venomous reptiles. The peacock and the cobra are believed to be natural enemies and the poet emphasising the heat of the summer, describes the cobra living in the shade of the peacock's wing, the two natural enemies forgetting their ancient hostility in the face of a common calamity.

Stanza 14, *Line* 2 : LION (Sk. Simha)

The lion was known to the Vedic poets who were greatly impressed by its roar reverberating in hill and dale. In those days the lion must have been common in the regions of the Punjab upto the Sutlej. It is significant that while the tiger is a native of the Indian forests from the high altitudes of the Himalayas down to the southern ocean and is found elsewhere in Asia, the lion has been confined to the East and North-West of India and now survives only in the semi-sanctuary of the Gir forest in Junagadh state, in Kathiawad. Thus the Gir forest is the last refuge of the lion which is extinct in Asia. Fights between the lion and other animals including the elephant were formerly considered a worthy sport to amuse ruling princes and until recently were held at Junagadh and Baroda. In the poem the poet once again in order to emphasise the terrible heat of the summer describes the two born enemies, the lion and the elephant, as being so overcome with the heat that they abandon their enmity and take shelter together. The lion, besides being the emblem of royal authority, has from time immemorial been the symbol of resolute courage. The word SIMHA has, therefore, formed part of the names of the Kshatriya (warrior class) as well as martial clans such as the Bhumihar Brahmas of the United Provinces and other clans and sects. The originally peaceful sect of the Sikhs (Sk. Sishya, meaning disciple) were organised by their later teachers into a church militant administration in its decline. The Sikhs too adopted the word simha as a part of their names together with militancy. The Jaina, pacificists from ancient times, have also used simha as part of their names to symbolise the courage of non-violence; for with them ahimsa or non-violence has ever been the creed of the brave.

Stanza 14, *Line* 5 : ELEPHANT

The word for elephant is hastin in the Rig Veda where it is described as " an animal with a hand." The word hathi, in the provincial languages is derived from hastin through the Prakrit. The early Aryans were apparently awestruck by this strange animal who used its trunk as a hand. It had to function twice, they noted, to be able to drink: first to take up water with the trunk and then discharge it into its mouth. Hence the later Sanskrit word for the elephant is a multiple drinker, dvipa; anekapa.

The elephant is now extinct in Kathiawad but in the time of Chanakya, Surashtra (Kathiawad) was the source of supply of elephants for the imperial army though they were inferior to the elephants of Kalinga (Orissa).

Stanza 17, *Line* 14: BHADRAMUSTA (Sk.); *Cyperus Rotundus*

The *cyperus rotundus* is a perennial tuberous herb with leaves narrowly linear which flowers in compound umbels of red-brown spikelets throughout the year. It is not easily eradicated from the lawns in Indian cities and parks. Kalidasa refers in *Sakuntala* to the musta grass being the favourite fodder of the wild boar.

Stanza 19, *Line* 4: SARASA (Sk.); *Antigone antigone* (Linnaeus)

The sarasa is common in Bihar and United Provinces and is to be found throughout Northern India and Assam and also in Burma, Siam and Cochin China. It is a resident species always frequenting the same place. The birds stand five feet in height and the head and upper neck is bright red with ashy crown and bluish ash-grey plumage.

The birds pair for life and live in such companionship that even while they are feeding they are hardly a few yards apart. It is said that if one of the pair is killed the other dies. They make delightful pets if caught young and kept loose in a garden where they maintain an efficient watch. They have a loud trumpet-like call which is uttered when disturbed and when they are on the wing.

The sarasa does not live in river-beds but is found in marshy spots, jheels, tanks and rice-fields at all times of the year.

Stanza 20, *Line* 1 : CREST-JEWEL

The spit-venom cobra and certain other hooded snakes are believed to carry a rare jewel on the top of their hood. Cobras are supposed to live for a thousand years and the jewelled crest is believed to be found on the old ones.

Stanza 24, *Line* 2 : PALASHA—*Butea frondosa*

The *butea frondosa* which is the true " Flame of the Forest " is a medium sized tree which is deciduous in winter. Before the leaves come in March it puts forth a gorgeous display of orange crimson flowers in dense fascicles. The flowers are supposed to be the harbingers of the spring and are lavishly praised by all Sanskrit poets in descriptions of the Vasanta Ritu or the spring. The bright colour of the inflorescence yields a fine dye with which the " spring-coloured garments " have been dyed for centuries.

It was in the shade of palasha trees in the Lumbini grove that the birth of the blessed Buddha took place when his mother, according to ancient custom which is still prevalent, was on her way to her parents' residence for her accouchement. The tree has thus appeared in innumerable sculptures and paintings for nearly two and a half millennium.

Stanza 24, *Line* 3: SINDHURA (Sk.); Lead oxide, commonly known as red lead

The sindhura tilaka or vermilion mark on the forehead has long been used by Hindus. Recently it has become popular as a beauty spot and is used by Indian women irrespective of caste or creed.

Stanza 25, *Line* 5 : BAMBOO (Sk. Vamsa)

The Sanskrit name vamsa from which are derived the words current in provincial languages, was applied by Sir William Jones to bamboos in general. The several varieties are classified under two genera: *bambusa* and *dandrocalamus.* Several species of each genus—dwarf as well as tall (attaining a hundred feet in height) are known as bamboo in different parts of India including the Himalayas. Decorative bamboos with angled stems and variegated foliage have now been introduced from China and Japan. The solid or male bamboo (*d. strictus*) is used to make spears for pigsticking. For a detailed account see Gamble: *" The Bamboos of India."*

The bamboo, it is said, flowers once in thirty or forty years and then only in time of drought: it has thus been considered a herald of famine.

Stanza 26, *Line* 2: SALMALI (Sk.); *Cochlospermum gossypium*

The Salmali or *cochlospermum* is commonly known as the silk cotton tree. This name is derived from the ligament of pure white floss, the so-called " silk cotton " which is found attached to seeds resembling cotton seeds, in capsules in the form of a goose's egg. This tree is deciduous and is a native of dry hills and forests. It bursts into blossom while still leafless during March-April and is a very conspicuous object from a distance in any region where it is plentiful. The flowers three to four inches in diameter are in terminal clusters of a lovely golden yellow. The capsules are softly tomentose in the form of a goose's egg, but larger. The plants are easily propagated from seed. A wonderful description of a giant specimen of this tree in the Vindhya forest is given by the famous poet Bana, a contemporary of the Emperor Harshavardhana, who also wrote the first Sanskrit novel *Kadambari, Harshacharita* and *Ratnavali.* The description is given by a certain Captain Parrot, one of the numerous families of parrots who have their home in the giant girth of the silk cotton tree described.

Stanza 27, *Line* 6 : DISTRAUGHT

The reaction to growing heat on the part of animals (Stanzas 13, 16, 18 and 20) and the panic caused among them by conflagration (St. 27) will be found accurate by those who have observed them closely. Animals have a curious similarity to human beings. Phyllis Bottome has thus described in *London Pride* the behaviour of animals in air raid shelters during the aerial bombardment: " Cats never as much as glanced at canaries: dogs relaxed cheek by jowl with the most offensive alley cats. All any of them wanted was to get into the darkest parts of the shelter and keep perfectly still. They seemed to feel there was danger all round without their adding to it."

Stanza 28, *Line* 3: PATALA (Sk.); *Stereospermum Suaveolens*

The city Pataliputra took its name from this flower.

CANTO II

Stanza 1, *Line* 1 : RAIN

Parjanya or Indra, the God of Rain, is praised in three hymns of the Rig Veda. See especially the lovely hymn V. 83, describing the rain storm. In the Rig Veda the Maruts whose function is to pour rain are bards who accompany Indra in his battles against the Titans. The Maruts ride in golden cars which gleam with lightning. They are clad in robes of rain and they cover the eye of the sun. The sight of the rain-clouds is an occasion for rejoicing, for singing and dancing. *BHADRAPADA.* To these early poems may be traced the imagery of the later classical writer.

Stanza 2, *Line* 3: NENUPHAR; Padma (Sk.); Kanwal (Hindi); *Nelumbium speciosum,* Lotus

This beautiful water plant is a common plant in the tanks in Eastern India. It displays a handsome, peony-like flower during the hot and rainy seasons and at the beginning of the cold season ripens its seed in curious, drooping, cone-shaped capsules. Sir E. Tennant writes: " In China and some parts of India the black seeds of the plants, which are not unlike little acorns, are served at table in place of almonds which they are said to resemble, but with a superior delicacy and flavour. I tasted the seeds in Ceylon and found them delicately flavoured, not unlike the kernel of the pine cone of the Apennines." According to Firminger they have much of the flavour and crispness of filberts. The nenuphar or blue lotus is called nilambuja (ambuja literally meaning water-born).

Stanza 3, *Line* 2 : CHATAKA (Sk.); Papiha (Hindi); *Hierococcyx varius* (Vahl) or common Hawk-Cuckoo

The hawk cuckoo is a small bird about the size of a pigeon inhabiting scrub jungle and deciduous forest and also groves of trees, mango topes and gardens in the neighbourhood of cultivation and human habitation. The species is confined to Ceylon and India where it is found practically throughout the country except Madras, the island of Bombay and Coimbatore. This bird is chiefly remarkable for its strange call on account of which it has been named the brain fever bird, as its call resembles "Brain Fever," "Brain Fever," uttered again and again in loud crescendo tones, each repetition higher in scale. The cry can also be written "pipeeha," "pipeeha." It can be heard for a considerable distance and is uttered at any time of the year but is especially vociferous from the early spring to the monsoon.

According to ancient legend the chataka was said to subsist on raindrops which it gathered as alms from the clouds. The Sanskrit poet used to write of the chataka who would rather die from thirst than drink aught but the raindrops from the clouds, as an instance of pride and self-respect.

Stanza 4, *Line* 2 : INDRA'S BOW

The rainbow was called the Bow of Indra, the God of Rain.

Stanza 5, *Line* 5: KANDALI (Sk.); *Aneilema nudiflorum*

Kandali plants are small grass-like herbs of annual growth with fibrous roots, producing blue or purple flowers in the rainy season. The stem is simple or branched from the base and is procumbent, often rooting at the base. The leaves are 2 to 5 inches long and sheathed, the sheath being hairy.

Stanza 5, *Line* 6: INDRAGOPAKA (Sk.); Birvaboti (Hindi)

The indragopaka or birvaboti is a small insect resembling the cochineal insect. It has a beautiful scarlet velvet skin and appears in great abundance just before and during the rainy season. It is a great favourite with Indian children who collect it to play with.

Stanza 5, *Line* 8 : THE GOOD EARTH

The ancient Sanskrit is *prithivi*, literally the broad one. The title of Pearl Buck's famous book *The Good Earth* best conveys the Vedic conception of the physical earth. The generous earth gave herself upto us: "I am plenitude, I am frightfulness." In the Rig Veda, Prithivi, the Earth, is coupled with her heavenly spouse, Dyaus (identical with the Greek Zeus) and the pair are adored as the universal parents. Hence our idea of Mother Earth and Mother India.

Stanza 8, *Line* 1 : MOUNT VINDHYA

The Vindhya hills are a low range connecting the northern extremities of the Eastern and Western Ghats and separating Northern India from the Deccan.

They are reckoned among the seven "Kula-giris" or principal ranges of Bharata Varsha and Manu described it as forming the southern limit of the Madhya-Desa or the middle region of India.

According to the legend related in Mahabharata, the personified Vindhya, being jealous of the Himalaya, demanded that the sun and moon should revolve around him in the same way as about Mount Meru. He then began to elevate himself so as to impede the progress of the sun and moon. The devas, growing alarmed, asked for aid from the great Rishi Agastya, [literally, AGA (Mountain) ASTI (Thrower)] who approached the Vindhya and asked for an easy passage to the South requesting the mountain to retain the same position until he returned. The Vindhya did as Agastya asked but Agastya never returned and the mountain never regained the elevation of the Himalayas.

According to legend the sage Agastya was the author of several Vedic hymns. He is the traditional Aryan conqueror and civiliser of the South. He is believed to have been an authority on medicine and to have given their grammar and language to the Tamilians.

Stanza 9, *Line* 4: UTPALA (Sk.); *Nymphaea coerulea*

The blue water lily common throughout India.

Stanza 12, *Line* 6 : KNICK-KNACKS OF BEAUTY

Beauty preparations in ancient India included poudre de riz (Salichurna) and scents and perfumes of various flowers. The incense of black aloe (Kalaguru) is still very popular.

Stanza 12, *Line* 10: BIMBA (Sk.); Tinda (Hindi); *Coccinia Indica*

A perennial climber with tendrils and fibrous roots producing white flowers during the rainy season. The fruit turns bright scarlet when ripe. The unripe fruit is commonly used as a vegetable.

Stanza 15, *Line* 5 : ICHOR

The juice which exudes from the temples of the male elephant when he is in rut.

Stanza 17, *Line* 4 : KADAMBA (Sk.); *Anthocephalus Indicus* or *Nauclea Kadamb*

A large handsome deciduous tree with drooping horizontal branches. The leaves are coriaceous and shining, and the flowers are in large heads of shining yellow. According to legend the Kadamba tree puts forth its buds during the reverberation of the thunderstorm.

Stanza 17, *Line* 4: SARJA (Sk.) ; Sal (Hindi) ; *Shorea Robusta Gosta*

A large tree flowering in March. The flowers are yellow and the leaves, six to ten inches long, are broad and ovate. The young branches and leaves are hairy.

Stanza 17, *Line* 4 : ARJUN (Sk.) ; *Terminalia Arjuna*

A large tree with buttressed trunk and smooth grey bark. The young branches and leaves are clothed with rust-coloured hairs. The leaves which are five to eight inches long become coriaceous and glabrous when mature. The flowers which appear just before February are of a dull yellow.

Stanza 17, *Line* 4: KETAKI (Sk.); Kevda (Hindi); *Pandanus Odoratissimus* or screw pine

The ketaki or screw pine, so called because of the curious screw-like arrangement of its long, spin-edged, sedge-like leaves on the summit of its stem, is a large shrub of 15 to 20 feet which extends over a large space by sending down aerial roots from its branches. It blossoms during the rainy season in panicles of large white sheath-like leaves enclosing spongy-looking bundles of closely packed, minute, white flowers. Roxburgh writes: " It is the tender, white leaves of the flowers, chiefly those of the male, that yield the most delightful of fragrance, for which they are so universally and deservedly esteemed. For of all perfumes in the world it must be the richest and most powerful." In Maharashtra the girls love to wear the kevda as part of the flower decoration of their braided hair. Kevda water, like rose water, is a very cooling and popular drink during the summer.

Snakes are supposed to be very fond of the perfume of ketaki and are always to be found in the neighbourhood of kevda groves.

Stanza 20, *Line* 3 : BAKULA (Sk.); Molsari (Hindi); *Mimusops Elengi*

This is a large timber tree much cultivated in gardens for its beauty as well as for the delightful fragrance diffused by the numberless pale green flowers it bears during the summer. The flowers when dried, retain the fragrance for a long time and both the fresh and dried flowers are made into chaplets for the hair and are much worn by the women of the Deccan.

Stanza 20, *Line* 5 : KAKUBHA (Sk.) ; *Terminalia Arjuna*

Kakubha is another name for the Arjuna tree.

Stanza 21, *Line* 3 : AGURU (Sk.) ; *Aquilaria Agallocha*

The fragrant Aloe wood from the large evergreen tree Aquillaria Agallocha. It has thin coriaceous shining leaves and bears white flowers in April.

Stanza 24, *Line* 5 : MALATI (Sk.) ; *Jasminum Grandiflorum*

A very pretty, large, twining shrub with graceful pinnate leaves, the leaflets less than an inch long. It bears during the hot and rainy seasons middling-size, fragrant white flowers. It resembles more than any other species, in leaf, flower and fragrance, the common Jasmine of the English gardens. The flowers are much used for perfume in India. They retain the fragrance even when dried.

Stanza 24, *Line* 8 : YUTHIKA (Sk.) ; *Jasminum Auriculatum*

A variety of Jasmine creeper with fragrant white flowers faintly tinged with purple.

CANTO III

Stanza 1, *Line* 1: AUTUMN; (Sk.) Sarad

The Indian Autumn, comprising the two months, Asvin and Kartika is loved by the Indians for the brilliance of the moonlight and because the weather is neither too cold nor too hot. Hence the blessing for a happy life is: " May you live a hundred Autumns."

Sarad is feminine in Sanskrit and the simile of the bride is appropriate. The ancient Indian tradition of modest upbringing requiring girls of good families to bend slightly, is still observed.

Stanza 1, *Line* 2 : KASA (Sk.) ; *Sactharum Spontaneum*

Kasa is a kind of grass which grows wild on the banks of rivers and streams in the United Provinces and Behar. The base of its flower is surrounded by soft silvery wool which when scattered by gusts of wind whitens the neighbouring fields in Autumn. The roots of this wild grass go down several feet and it is difficult to free the soil of Kasa wherever it has spread. Kasa and Munj grass make the best baskets in the United Provinces and Behar.

Stanza 1, *Line* 6: RICE; (Sk.) Sali

The old word is still current in Kashmir.

Stanza 1, *Line* 9 : BRIDE

Apparently when the poem was written the bridal dress was white in India. It is no longer universal and in some parts of India white is excluded as a sign of mourning and the bride wears coloured clothes, usually red or yellow.

Stanza 2, *Line* 6: SAPTACHADDA (Sk.) ; *Alstonia Scholaris*

Saptachadda also known as Saptaparna, is a medicinal plant which is now replacing quinine in India. The tree has a thick bark and is therefore also known in India as Vishala-twak.

Stanza 3, *Line* 5 : SHAFARI (Sk.); *Cyprinus Saphora*

A species of small fish that glitters. The silvery sparkle of the fish with which it is compared shows that the girdle was of silver and perhaps studded with many-coloured gems like the rainbow hues of the fish.

Stanza 3, *Line* 8 : GENEROUS HIPS

In Ancient India as in Iran, women with full hips were admired. They must have been the symbol of wealth and affluence and class distinction for the women of the idle rich were expected not to do any work. The admiration for full hips can perhaps be traced to the same origin as that of the binding of women's feet in ancient China.

Stanza 4, *Line* 7: YAK TAILS; (Sk.) Chamara; *Bos Grunniens*

Chamara is the bushy tail of the Tibetan animal, the yak, *Bos Grunniens*, which is itself known as Chamari. The tail is used as a fly whisk. The yak is a splendid beast with short legs, low quarters, warmly clad in long hair, and furnished with a bushy tail which serves him as a wind screen, the herd always feeding with its hind quarters to the wind. The yak will carry anything that a horse can carry, climb almost everywhere that a goat can and can cross a river with the ease of a hippopotamus. He is to the high altitude nomad, what the camel is to the Arab of the low lying desert. The huge white tail of the yak together with the white parasol, *Chattri*, have formed the insignia of royalty in India from ancient times. The Hindi chauri, for a fly whisk is derived from chamara.

Stanza 5, *Line* 4 : BANDHUKA (Sk.); *Ixora Coccinea*

The bandhuka is a branching shrub with corinaceous leaves that are pale when dry. It bears scarlet flowers all through the year particularly during the rainy season.

Stanza 5, *Line* 6 : KALAMA RICE

Kalama Rice is rice which is sown in May-June and ripens in December-January.

Stanza 6, *Line* 1 : KOVIDARA (Sk.); Bauhinia

There are several varieties of the lovely Bauhinia tree. *B. Retusa* blooms in September. It has corymbs of numerous small pale yellow flowers beautifully marked with small purple spots. *B. Triandra* is a large tree which bears in November racemes of large white flowers. Roxburgh says: "This, when in flower, is one of the most beautiful species of Bauhinia I have yet met with." *B. Variegata* is a rather large tree. It is an object of great splendour when in February it becomes one entire mass of purple and white blossom the large and handsome flowers having a strong resemblance to those of a pelargonium. The leaves of this tree and shoots are composed of two oval leaflets laid side by side and having the edges near the base united. In consequence of this twin-like union the genus was fancifully named by Plumier after the two brothers, Bauhin, celebrated botanists of the 16th Century, as being symbolic of the united efforts of the two brothers in the cause of science.

Stanza 7, *Line* 5 : NIGHT

The night garbed in moonlight is compared to a maiden dressed in white linen. In northern India white linen spread over a carpet to serve a meal or tea is still called Chandni.

Stanza 7, *Line* 1 : WILD DUCK; *Nettapus coromandelianus* (Gmelin)—Cotton Teal

The Cotton Teal is found in India, Ceylon and Burma and it extends eastwards through the Malay countries to China and southwards to the Philippines and the Celebes. In India it is absent along the Western border from Malabar to the Northern Punjab. It is a small species easily recognisable by the predominance of white in the plumage. The drake in full plumage is dark, glossy brown above with a white wing-bar and collar; the female is brown above and lacks the wing-bar and collar. It is a resident species but also locally migratory and is found wherever there is water with plenty of reeds, floating vegetation and the like, on jheels and village tanks. It may also be found on open sheets of water but even then it keeps to the weediest stretches and the near neighbourhood of cover. It lives in parties and small flocks and if left unmolested is not afraid of man. Whistler writes: "It is very noisy, uttering a peculiar cackling note which has been likened to the words 'Fixed Bayonets'." The birds feed on shoots and grain of wild and cultivated rice and other vegetable matter in addition to insects and worms. The breeding season is from July to September.

Stanza 8, *Line* 5 : KALAHAMSA or Singing swan

The kalahamsa is usually identified as the flamingo, *Phoenicopterus*

Ruberi (Pennant). It has rosy-pink and white plumage with black flight quills and a curious bill bent downwards and adapted for feeding in an inverted position. It is found in lagoons throughout India, but is most numerous as a non-breeding visitor to North-West India. It breeds in Cutch.

In Sanskrit literature the kalahamsa is usually referred to as a swan with a peculiarly melodious voice. In the famous work of Emperor Shri Harsha called *Naishadham*, dealing with the beautiful romance of Nala and Damayanti, it was a kalahamsa or singing swan that became the intermediary between the lovers carrying messages from them and telling tales of one to the other, thus igniting and inflaming their love. The kalahamsa is a favourite theme of the Sanskrit poets and another very famous poem is the " Hamsa Sandesam " written by Vedanta Desika, the great Vaishnavite. It has a similar theme to that of the " Meghaduta " or Cloud Messenger by Kalidasa.

Stanza 12, *Line* 5: CRANE; *Grus grus* (*Linnaeus*)

The common crane is a migratory bird breeding in Northern Europe and Northern Asia and wintering in Southern Asia, Northern Africa, South Western Asia, Northern India and China. In India it is seen as a winter visitor throughout the plains of the North, extending as far South as the Deccan (Bombay Presidency) and Orissa. The Indian birds are said to belong to the race *Grus grus lilifordi*, which breeds in Eastern Siberia and Turkestan.

In appearance the common crane is a large grey bird with a long neck and legs, the head and upper neck blackish and white with a dull red patch on the nape. The tail consists of a mass of drooping curly plumes.

The common crane arrives in India in late September and early October and stays until the end of March or the beginning of April. It is found in large flocks on open plains and the birds fly in regular formations with a curious trumpeting noise. The black markings on the head and neck and the black legs distinguish it from the Saras Crane.

Stanza 13, *Line* 5 : KUTAJA (Sk.); *Wrightia Zeylanica*

The Kutaja tree is a small tree branching dichotomously with leaves three to five inches long with a very short petiole. It flowers between March and June. The flowers are white.

Stanza 13, *Line* 6 : NIPA (Sk.); *Anthocephalus Indicus*

Nipa is another name for the Kadamba tree.

Stanza 14, *Line* 2 : SHEPHALIKA (Sk.); Harsingar and Parijata (Hindi); *Nycanthes Arbortristis*

The Shephalika or Harsingar tree is a great favourite on account of the fragrance of its small starlike flowers with orange centres and stems. It grows all over India and reaches a height of about 10 feet. It bears from September to November a profusion of flowers which scent the atmosphere for a wide distance around with a delightful honey-like fragrance. The flowers drop off in the morning carpeting the ground all around the tree. In Northern India the stems are dried and used as a dye.

Stanza 15, *Line* 1 : KALHARA (Sk.); *Nympheae Lotus*

The white esculent water-lily.

Stanza 15, *Line* 1 : PADMA (Sk.); *Nelumbium speciosum*

Any kind of lotus is called Padma. The face and eyes of beautiful women are compared to the lotus flower by Sanskrit poets.

Stanza 15, *Line* 1 : KUMUDA (Sk.); *Nympheae Esculenta*

The white esculent water-lily expands its petals during the night and closes them during the day. Hence it is known as the moon-lotus.

Stanza 18, *Line* 1 : PRIYANGU (Sk.); *Panicum Italicum*

The Priyangu shrubs are three to five feet high with smooth, round stem and roots arising from the lower joints. The flowers appear during August in compound spikes. The flowers are said to burgeon at the touch of a woman.

Stanza 18, *Line* 5 : ASOKA (Sk.); *Saraca Indica* also known as *Jonesia*

The Asoka is an evergreen tree of considerable size with compact clusters of flowers varying in colour from pale orange to scarlet almost to be mistaken at a hasty glance for immense trusses of Ixora blooms. The flowers emit a faint scent for some distance around. Some consider this tree, when in full bloom, superior in beauty to the Amherstia which it resembles somewhat in foliage though its mode of flowering is quite dissimilar.

Firminger writes: "The first time I saw the Asoka in flower was on the hill where the famous rock-cut temple of Karlee is situated and a large concourse of people had assembled for the celebration of some Hindu festival. Before proceeding to the temple, the Marathi women gathered from two trees, which were flowering somewhat below, each a fine truss of blossom, and inserted it in the hair at the back of her head which she had seemingly combed and dressed with uncommon care for the occasion. As they moved about in groups it is impossible to imagine a more delightful effect than the rich scarlet bunches of flowers presented upon their fine, glossy black hair."

Stanza 23, *Line* 2 : PANKAJA (Sk.); *Nelumbium speciosum*

The word literally means "Born of the mud" and refers to the lotus that opens at sunrise and closes in the evening; it is also known as Padma and Kamal.

CANTO IV

Stanza 1, *Line* 1 : YAWA (Sk.); Barley, *Hordeum Vulgare*

Barley which is one of the staple cereals of India is much used by the poorer people. A malt liquor or beer known as yawa-sura used to be made from it.

The yawa or barley is of annual growth producing many stems two to three feet high and has few leaves, the upper ones close to the spike with a smooth sheath and glaucous green blades. The spikes are compressed and the spikelets sessile. The flowering glumes are firm and five-ribbed, rounded on the back and ending into a long stiff awn that is rough with forward prickles. The grain usually adheres to the palea. The flowering season is in the cold season.

Stanza 1, *Line* 4 : LODHRA (Sk.); *Symplocos racemosa*

The flowers of this tree are also called *Bassia latifolia.* They are much used for their medicinal value. In ancient days the powdered petals used to be put into wine to perfume it.

Stanza 2, *Line* 2 : KUNDA (Sk.); *Jasminum pubescens*

The Kunda which flowers in March-April is a short shrub with its stem spirally twisted in rope fashion and white flowers. In the Kumaon hills the single-petalled wild, white rose is called kunda by the peasants.

Stanza 3, *Line* 6 : MALLARD, *Anas platyrhyncha* (Linnaeus)

I have followed Griffith's interpretation in his translation of the Ramayana. According to Whistler, the mallard is the best known of all wild ducks and breeds throughout the Northern Hemisphere and in winter is found southwards to Northern Africa, Madeira, the Canaries and Northern India. It is also found in North America. In India it breeds in large numbers in Kashmir and is to be found in the N.-W.F. Province, Baluchistan and the Punjab in great abundance and in smaller numbers in the Central Provinces. It is unknown only in S. India. The mallard which is about 24 inches long is richly coloured. The duck is mottled brown and buff and the drake has a dark green head and chestnut breast separated by a white ring and they both have violet purple speculum bordered above and below by black and white bands.

In India the mallard is found in pairs, small parties and in flocks numbering upto fifty birds. They haunt jheels, rivers, lakes and tanks, etc. They feed both by day and night and have a regular flight to and from favoured feeding grounds at dawn and dusk.

Stanza 5, *Line* 2 : KALIYAKA

A fragrant yellow wood resembling sandal wood.

Stanza 5, *Line* 5 : KALAGURU, *Aquilaria agallocha*

The black variety of the Aloe wood very popular in use as incense.

Stanza 8, *Line* 4: DEMOISELLE CRANE, *Anthropoides Virgo* (Linnaeus)

The Demoiselle Crane known as the Koonj in India is a common winter visitor to northern India. It is a small grey bird and can be recognised by a plume of soft feathers behind each eye and the black undersurface of the whole neck terminating in black plumes pendant over the breast.

The Demoiselle crane and the common crane (*Grus grus lilfordi*) known as the kulung, usually travel together and have similar habits. They arrive in India in late September or early October and stay until the end of March. Whistler writes: " In North West India the passage may be an impressive sight. The observer who is favourably situated will hear one morning a loud clanging noise and looking towards the south will see in the distant sky a vast tangled skein of birds. As it approaches it resolves itself into an immense concourse of cranes flying at a tremendous height. The stream of birds travel across the sky like an army. Big flocks, small parties, single birds and chevrons extend as far as the eye can reach, all travelling the same line. Then perhaps the leading flock circles round in a vast swirl, feeling for its direction: the next formations close up to it and again the army moves forward. As they go a single bird trumpets, answered by others.

" The crane's power of uttering these sonorous and trumpet-like notes is usually attributed to the peculiar formation of its trachea or windpipe which on quitting the lower end of the neck passes backwards through the fork of the merrythought and is received in a hollow space formed by the bony walls of the breast bone. Here it makes these turns and then runs upwards and backwards into the lungs." Whilst in India the cranes usually congregate in small flocks passing the middle of the day and the whole night in open river-beds or jheels where their vigilance protects them from surprise attacks. Every morning and evening they go to feed in cultivated areas, doing great damage to young crops. Their diet of young shoots and grain makes the flesh delicious eating.

Stanza 16, *Line* 3 : BODICE ; (Sk.) Kurpakasa

The Kurpakasa was a bodice with short sleeves worn next to the body by women.

Stanza 18, *Line* 4 : KRAUNCHA (Sk.); *Numenius Arquata* (Linnaeus) Curlew

The krauncha or curlew which breeds in Northern and Central Europe extending as far as Siberia during the months of April, May and June, is a winter visitor to India, Burma and Ceylon where it arrives in September leaving again for its breeding grounds by the beginning of April.

In Winter the krauncha is to be found in small numbers singly or in pairs or small parties, around jheels and marshlands and rivers but it is most plentiful along the sea-coasts. Its diet consists of molluscs and crustaceans in addition to insect larvae and vegetable matter such as grass shoots, seaweed, etc.

The call of the curlew is most distinctive and can be recognised from far, as it consists of a loud and plaintive scream resembling the word " curlew."

CANTO V

Stanza 1, *Line* 2 : SUGARCANE ; (Sk.) IKSU ; (Hindi) IKH ; *Saccharum offici*

Sugar and all its equivalents in European languages are derived from the Latin. The Romans learnt the use of sugar from India and their word is derived from the Sanskrit shakkara. (See Radha Kumud Mukerjee's book *Hindu Civilisation.*) The sugarcane is a large perennial grass with stems 6-12 feet high, thick, solid, jointed and polished. The lower internodes are short with fibrous roots above each joint. The leaves are large and crowded, the lower ones soon falling off: the ligule is short and entire with a sheath of about one inch in length and the midrib of the blade prominent beneath. The flowering time is from January to February and the flowers which are feathery and of a greyish colour come in large panicles.

Stanza 5, *Line* 3: TAMBULA (Sk.) ; *Piper betel*

The leaf of the vine, piper betel, is the Tambula of the text. The word *betel* is derived from the Portuguese *betle*, a corruption of the Malayalam word *vittila* meaning a leaf. Nowadays it is ordinarily called *pan*, from the Sanskrit word *parna* for leaf.

Pan-supari is offered to visitors during a friendly visit or at the termination of an official interview or entertainment. It is an ancient Indian custom.

The Moghul Emperors adopted this ceremonial together with the complete set of forms and ceremonies of pomp and circumstance of ancient India—such as the parasol, the yaktails, the chamberlain, the ushers, the court etiquette, the elephant, the use of the water of the Ganga and the weighing against gold, etc., which Bernier, who observed them against the court of Delhi has described to us in detail.

Stanza 13, *Line* 9 : LAKSHMI

Women are still addressed as Devi meaning goddess as a mark of respect. Lakshmi is added as a suffix to a Brahman woman's name in some provinces such as Kathiawad. The legend of the birth of Lakshmi or the Goddess of Fortune is thus given in the ancient Bhagavata: Once upon a time when the

Titans and the gods were at war, the belligerents agreed, upon the advice of Vishnu, to work together to churn the ocean of milk to discover ambrosia, (Amrit) the milk of immortality. The great powers uprooted Mount Mandara and sank it into the depths of the ocean to serve as the dasher of the churn. As a support for Mount Mandara, Vishnu became a giant tortoise (Kurma) and kept it from submerging. The mighty serpent, Vasuki, was passed round the mountain dasher to serve as a cord. The gods at the tail-end and the Titans at the head then commenced hauling, each team in rhythmic succession. Suddenly from the seething waves the terrible poison halahala was thrown up capable of destroying the whole world including the gods had not Siva in his infinite compassion for all living beings, swallowed it. Thereafter, *inter alia*, came up marvellous creatures such as the horse, Ucchaisrava, with his moon-coloured coat, the lordly elephant, Iravata, the divine apsaras and the lovely Lakshmi who became the consort of Vishnu. The Bhagavata thus describes Lakshmi:—

"Holding in her hand a lotus garland around which hummed the bees, she turned her gracious face, made lovely by the smile of modesty, and against whose cheeks sparkled beautiful earrings, her two breasts beautifully matched and close together covered with powdered sandalwood and saffron, her waist so slight that it was scarcely visible, her every step was accompanied by the tuneful jingle of the anklets which adorned her feet and her whole body was like a golden *liana*."

Lastly there rose from the waves a dark youth bearing a vase filled with ambrosia, the draught of immortality. At the banquet which followed, the Titans, Rahu and Ketu, served the ambrosia to the assembled gods. Siva cut off the head of Rahu while the latter was taking a deep draught from the vase. The feast broke up and war was renewed which the gods, now become immortal, won.

CANTO VI

Stanza 1, *Line* 4: MANGO; AMRA (Sk.); (Hindi) AM; *Mangifera indica*

The word mango is of Tamil origin. The mango has been cultivated in India from remote times. It is mentioned in the most ancient Sanskrit works and excellent representations of this tree are to be found in stupas of about 150 B.C., including the famous Barhut stupa. The early Chinese pilgrims who visited India all mentioned it and have recorded their impressions of it in the 17th century. Van Reede, a native of Holland, who visited the West Coast of India, described in detail numerous varieties of this queen of Indian fruits. Botanically in India there is only one species, the Mangifer Indica, of which the innumerable varieties are sub-divisions.

The blossom of the mango is one of the five flowers which form the arrows of Kama, God of Love.

Stanza 4, *Line* 5: KUSUMBHA (Sk.); *Carthamous tinctorius.* Commonly known as Safflower

The kusumbha plants are thistle-like herbs, glabrous or pubescent, with orange red flowers. They are cultivated all over India for the valuable dye stuff obtained from the reddish flowers which bloom from March to April.

Stanza 5, *Line* 1: KARNIKARA (Sk.); *Erythrina indica*

The Karnikara is a tree of moderate size and is exceedingly striking when in March it becomes a perfect blaze with its handsome clusters of large, brilliant scarlet flowers borne at the end of its stems. At the time of flowering the tree is completely leafless if it is in a place where the water-supply is stopped. In the Deccan the tree is wild and at Nasik is planted as live-supports for the grape vine.

Stanza 5, *Line* 3: NAVAMALLIKA (Sk.); *Jasminum arborescens*

The Navamallika is a large shrub or scrubby tree. It is the double flowered jasmine resembling the Tuscan jasmine and it bears flowers like small white roses. These flowers are in great demand and large quantities are sold in bazaars strung together as garlands for the neck. In the Deccan chaplets of flowers are worn in the hair by women.

Stanza 12, *Line* 5 : MUSK; (Sk.) KASTURIKA

Musk is a perfume supposed to be found in the navel of the musk deer. It is brought from Kashmir, Western Assam, Nepal and Bhutan, the best quality coming from Bhutan. On account of its fragrance and its medicinal virtues it is of great value. It used to form an important part of toilet preparations for women, being used as a paste either as a mark on the forehead or applied to the breasts. It is also called *Mrigmada* or *Kuranganabhi.*

Stanza 14, *Line* 1 : CUCKOO ; (Sk.) PARIBHRITA ; literally "nourished by another"

There are several varieties of the cuckoo in India including the *Hierococcyx Varius* (*Vahe*) or common Hawk-Cuckoo also known as the Brain-Fever Bird, the *Clamator Jocobinus* (*Boddaert*) or Pied Crested Cuckoo and the *Eudynamis Scolopaceus* (*Linnaeus*) or koel. All these birds belong to the group of arboreal parasitic cuckoos which foist their eggs and family responsibilities upon other birds. The young cuckoo after hatching usually succeeds in ejecting his rightful nest-fellows from the nest and monopolising the attention of his foster parents.

Stanza 17, *Line* 1 : ATIMUKTA (Sk.); *Jasminum sp* :

One of the most delightful of the jasmines and especially pleasing when in the early mornings of February and March it perfumes the garden with its lovely fragrance. It has a rich foliage of lanceolate, lightly varnished leaves, two to three inches in length and terminal corymbs of large, sparkling, fragrant, white flowers with the tube and underside of two of the lobes purple. The calyces and the unexpanded buds which are of a shiny purple have a beautiful effect intermingled with the white flowers.

Stanza 18, *Line* 2 : KURUBAKA (Sk.); *Cedrela Toona*

The Kurubaka trees have pinnate leaves and small paniculate white flowers with a fragrance like honey. The leaves are twelve to eighteen inches long. The flowering season is from March to April.

Stanza 24, *Line* 1 : CHAITRA

Chaitra is the name of the lunar month in which the full month extends in the constellation Chitra, corresponding to March-April.

Stanza 25, *Line* 5: SAILEYA (Sk.) ; Alpine flowers

The Sanskrit word Saileya, meaning the rose flower, has many meanings including benzoin, rocksalt, fragrant resin and the like.

Stanza 28, *Line* 5 : MALAYA

Malaya is the name of the mountain range on the west of Malabar which is an extension of the Western Ghats. This range abounds in sandal trees hence the wind blowing from Malaya during the hot season, known as the Malaya-marut, is represented in Sanskrit poetry as bearing the fragrance of sandal wood.

Stanza 28, *Line* 8 : KAMA

Kama, meaning wish, desire or longing, is the name of the God of Love. He is variously represented as being the son of Vishnu, Brahma and Baladeva, and was the husband of Rati. He attempted to disturb the meditations of Siva and was burnt to ashes by the wrath and fire of his eye. The festival is celebrated on the night of the full moon in the month of Phalgun.

Stanza 28, *Line* 9 : VASANTA

Vasanta meaning the spring, comprises the two months of Chaitra and Vaisakha. The vernal festival formerly held on the first Monday of Chaitra is now held on the fourth Monday of Phalgun and is commonly known as Holi.